



DESCRIPTIVE WRITING...

EVELYN MAY ALBRIGHT



University
for the
Creative Arts

Ashley Road
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 5BE

Tel: 01372 202461

E-mail: gatewayepsom@uca.ac.uk

Surrey
KT18 5BE

Fax: 01372 202457
e-mail: libraryepsom@uca.ac.uk



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DESCRIPTIVE WRITING



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DESCRIPTIVE WRITING THE PA. STATE COLLEGE

BY

EVELYN MAY ALBRIGHT, A.M.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

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PREFACE

THIS book is intended for use as a text in composition courses. The value of practice in descriptive writing for increasing the range and accuracy of the student's observation, stimulating his imagination, and perfecting his powers of expression is so well understood by educators that it need not be further emphasized; but it may be worth while to call attention to the fact that assignments in descriptive composition are peculiarly convenient in daily theme courses, owing to the ease with which every student may find for himself fresh and varied materials and to the possibility of securing at the same time brevity and finish.

The text is furnished with abundant illustrations of the theory, because it is felt to be more important for a student to see how a number of good writers do describe than to be told how one thinks they should. The brief notes in the Appendix serve merely to indicate the special reason for including each selection in this volume. Interpretative comment is left to the instructor or his students, as is also the invention of assignments in descriptive writing.

Acknowledgment should here be made of the courtesy of those authors and publishers who, as indicated in the foot-notes, have kindly granted permission to reprint extracts from their works.

E. M. A.

OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,
May, 1911.

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DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

PART I.—THEORY OF DESCRIPTION

I. THE SCOPE OF DESCRIPTION

DESCRIPTION aims to stimulate the imagination to form mental pictures. But these are more than copies of the appearances of concrete objects; for even the simplest kind of description, the pictorial, carries with it some hint of the observer's attitude toward that which he describes; and the more highly imaginative description—that which aims to suggest an impression rather than form a picture of an object—includes considerable interpretation. This is not, however, carried on by deliberate and methodical analysis of traits and qualities: such portrayal, even of concrete objects, is properly the work of exposition. The interpretative describer only now and then suggests, by a vivid account of his own personal impressions, what he conceives to be the essential character and significance of the object.

Exposition on abstract subjects is at once recognizable; but exposition applied to concrete objects so nearly approaches the methods of interpretative description that at times one can make a distinction only of degree and not of kind. Pure exposition aims to do something quite remote from the aim of description—to explain clearly to the understanding certain facts in their relations—

abstract qualities, ideas, principles. Its main methods, therefore, are definition and analysis. But there are occasions when these methods prove too difficult or dull. For example, in explaining the working principle of a suction pump, a windmill, a steam-engine, a combination lock, it is desirable, for clearness as well as interest, to describe accurately the essential parts, perhaps even to employ a diagram or sketch. It is so much easier to grasp a principle or abstract idea if the imagination is set to work on a concrete illustration. This is simply because we get all our knowledge, in the first place, from concrete experience. Any "popular" expositor who wishes to present a somewhat difficult thought in an interesting way resorts to concrete methods. A great scientist who wishes to unfold to the minds of laboring men his vast conception of the evolution of this earth and the slow changes of its living forms enlists their interest in a simple bit of native chalk which he minutely describes to them. The reporter who undertakes to explain to his varied public the intricacies of the mechanism of the wireless telegraph invents a visit to a station, and through lively description and dialogue conveys an amount of information that he could not hope to have assimilated by the mind of every reader if he presented it entirely in the abstract. The lecturer who understands the ways of animals and wishes young people to share and enjoy his knowledge does not, as a rule, deliver an expository essay. At least a part of his material is thrown into a story form and enlivened with pictorial description. Even the critic of literature, music, or art, whom we are accustomed to regard as the most abstract type of thinker, necessarily mingles description with his analysis when he attempts to interpret to a miscellaneous audience the significance of a school of writers, musicians, or artists, or of any of their productions.

We see, then, that, while exposition and description are typically quite different in their purposes and methods, they are in practice often so intimately united that it is hard to say just where one leaves off and the other begins. How is a character sketch to be classified? If complete, it contains a description of appearance and manners, a narrative of significant speech and action, and an analysis of disposition and mental and moral traits. As the final end of character study seems to be interpretation, we may prefer to classify it as exposition; but we should not fail to notice the large proportion of descriptive and narrative materials and methods that go into the making of every character sketch that seems alive. Perhaps it is safer to say that the character sketch is a composite type, which can be classified only with an understanding of the author's purpose. It is no great matter of regret, however, that it should be difficult at times to label a piece of writing description, or narration, or exposition, or argumentation, or persuasion; for the division of all discourse into four or five mutually exclusive forms is entirely artificial, inasmuch as they normally occur in combination. The distinction is convenient for purposes of rhetoric, because it enables one to study the typical methods of each form; but the end of such study should be the judgment which shall enable an author to decide for himself where these forms would be more effective if kept distinct, and where and how they may best be made to serve one another.

It will readily be seen that exposition and argument are very closely related, because they are both concerned with thought relations and because proof cannot proceed without explanation. The relation between descriptive and narrative writing is no less intimate. Both are concrete and imaginative, aiming to present as real a personal experience. The same object may be treated by description or narration, according to the writer's interest.

His purpose appears in a different selection, proportioning, and emphasizing of details. Thus, a descriptive account of a football game concentrates the attention upon its changing aspects as a scene, while a narrative account employs progressive pictures for the sake of increased vividness, so that, by clearly realizing the scenes in detail, the reader may have a stronger sense of the reality of the game and hence a keener interest in its outcome. Narration cannot be entirely lifelike without occasional recourse to description.

Description is, on the whole, usually subordinate to narration. Literary description consists for the most part of miniatures of persons and places set in frames of narratives. But in its turn it makes free use of narrative, sometimes as a mere device for shifting the point of view, but oftener because living, moving, changing objects—such, for example, as a horse-race, a thunder-storm, a battle—cannot be adequately suggested to the imagination without the aid of narrative movement. Even in what one might be disposed to call stationary description, narrative touches are often interspersed for vividness.

Inasmuch as description readily merges into exposition and narration and is commonly employed by them as an accessory, it has no large, independent place in our literature, unless it may be in poetry. Prose description occurs chiefly in reminiscent sketches and books of travel, incidentally in novels and short stories, and in scientific treatises or other didactic articles.

The incidental nature of description is worth insisting on, because it results in some very definite limitations of form and content. It prescribes, in general, that where set pictures occur, they shall be rapidly sketched in. For narrative or expository movement is better assisted by flashes of description than by large, stationary masses.

A realization of this fact will prevent one from indulging in leisurely elaboration of detail except where he is employing description for its own sake, and will show him that it is often possible to secure greater force through concentration. Fleeting touches of description are not only more graceful but more natural and convincing than a more extended treatment would be.

Although the work of description, considered with relation to other kinds of writing, may fairly be called subordinate and incidental, it is no mean art. To make the slight touches of description vivid and effective, not only must one have a trained observation, imaginative ability, and good taste: one must be master of all the resources of style. For there is, after all, no finer test of an author's style than his power to describe.

II. KINDS OF DESCRIPTION

DESCRIPTION has been variously classified, on the basis of the author's purpose, attitude, or general method, as being: (1) scientific or artistic, according to whether the writer seeks merely to give accurate information or to present that information in a literary style, so as to appeal to the reader's æsthetic tastes; (2) objective or subjective, according to whether the writer describes plain fact or projects his personality into the thing described; and (3) enumerative or impressionistic, according to the method of selecting and using the parts or qualities of the object in description. Any of these classifications would serve, but the first is perhaps most satisfactory for marking off the distinction between the two widely different uses to which description may be put. And the other distinctions are for the most part implied in this one; for the purpose of the writer—the

use he puts his description to—will determine his attitude toward his material and his method of procedure.

The purpose of scientific description is practical, didactic. It calls for some imagination in the making of accurate mental pictures on the basis of facts supplied. But, inasmuch as the interest centres on thoroughness of detail, the method of scientific description is analytical, enumerative, like that of an inventory of facts. These facts the scientist endeavors to see just as they are, objectively true for any man, eliminating so far as is possible the individual angle of vision. Scientific description of an object claims to be an impartial report of its primary qualities or attributes. If there is selection of details, it is made simply with reference to the physical point of view of the observer or in accordance with his mental attitude toward his subject. It is just because of this lack of the personal point of view that purely scientific description, however excellent in method or even in style, is usually classed with didactic works rather than with what is commonly called "literature."¹

Artistic description may convey information, but it must do more than this: it must produce a pleasurable illusion of life. It may have for a part of its aim accurate portrayal of real objects, but it does not rest in reproduction of things seen. In its highest form it appeals to the creative, associative, and interpretative imagination. In [method] it is synthetic, rather than analytic, creating new wholes from the elements of experience. It is suggestive, hinting always more than it says, setting in motion new trains of thought. There is no effort to report all details impartially. Those which are most characteristic, striking, or for any reason peculiarly interesting to the writer

¹ Gibbon's description of Byzantium illustrates the methods of the didactic describer. The plan is orderly; the style, clear but unadorned.

are selected for special emphasis. In literary description the presence of the personal equation is often the secret of an added charm. This means that the artistic writer is governed in his selection of details by an [imaginative and emotional, as well as a physical, point of view. [Choice of details in his case, then, reflects his mood and interests, conveys his personal interpretation or impression.

• The distinctions here made are between two types or classes of description, and they must not be regarded as absolute for every case. There is no reason, for instance, why an artist in description may not wish sometimes to produce as clear and accurate an image as a scientist. And there is no reason why a scientist—especially if he is writing for people of little scientific knowledge—should not resort at need to all sorts of imaginative methods, to interest the reader and lead him on to an understanding and appreciation of the facts. On the boundary line between scientific and artistic description is a growing body of nature literature rapidly becoming popular because of its wealth of interesting facts and the pleasing way in which those facts are presented. Scientists are coming more and more to realize the value of the concrete form of presentation in leading the minds of the young and untrained to grasp truths which, presented in the abstract, are so dull as not to enlist human interest. The same impulse which has led some of the more serious scientists, notably Huxley and Tyndall, to enlist concrete description in the interest of solid expository work, has led some of the more popular writers on scientific subjects to borrow from the literary artist some descriptive methods. The writings of such observers as Lowell, Thoreau, Van Dyke, Burroughs, Torrey, and Thompson-Seton are of value to the general reader not so much because they present some scientific truths about the

out-door world as because, through an interesting presentation of these truths, they stimulate the reader to an independent search for knowledge, by showing him that there is a wonderfully interesting world of natural phenomena waiting to be discovered by him if he will only sharpen his powers of observation and extend the range of his own perceptions in accordance with new lines of interest.

III. THE GATHERING OF MATERIALS

ATTENTION is often called to the similarity between description and other picturing arts. Description has even been called "word-painting." There are, of course, many truths which hold good in all representative arts, as, for example, perspective, proportion, and truth to point of view; but the aim of description should never be regarded as identical with that of painting.] For, although painting may interpret and description may picture, painting is always chiefly concerned with pictorial portrayal; and literary description, with imaginative suggestion. Owing to the differences in medium, it is unwise for a describer to attempt to rival a painter in his own field. The artist of the brush has always the advantage of being able to present a view at once as a whole. He can therefore furnish with greater accuracy more details of outline, size, grouping, perspective, color, light, and shade. Where the appeal is visual and the picture stationary and not too large for his canvass, the painter is in his element; but where the scene is shifting and panoramic, where life and change are to be suggested, the describer, by adding details of motion and by resorting to the narrative form, has a distinct advantage. He can, moreover, express a subtler, more complex experi-

ence through the medium of words; for he can combine with all the details furnished by the eye, sounds, odors, tastes, impressions from the sense of touch, general physical feelings, moods, in such a way as to suggest the manifold richness of human experience. All those deeper and larger feelings and instincts which are so difficult to define but which we all may share because they have their roots in a common sense experience, can be more skilfully suggested by the artist in description. The imaginative and emotional life, as well as the intellectual, finds in language its finest and most sympathetic medium of expression. [What one may learn, then, from a comparison with the painting art is that, while description may very well be less exact and detailed in its visual appeal, it should be more suggestive and broader in its range. Essential to the securing of this broader range are the awakening of closer observation and the realization of the value and the methods of imaginative suggestion.

For writing of the concrete world of people and things, whether by describing or narrating, [clear and sympathetic observation is the first essential. Preparation for descriptive writing is, very simply, the habit of clear seeing and right feeling. Ruskin says: "The more I think of it, I find this conclusion more impressed upon me—that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something and tell what it saw in a plain way." One may safely infer that Ruskin would never have called a seer a man who merely noted down form, size, color, texture, and position of material objects seen. Ruskin himself did all this with delicate precision; but he did infinitely more—[he gave his sense of values with his reports of what he saw.] Seeing for him always included something of interpretation of the percept, and this is entirely just; for every new thing that comes into

our experience acquires importance by its association with former impressions of similar or related things. But there cannot be truth in the interpreting of our experience if there is not, first of all, truth in the getting of it. It has been said that "observation, accurate and sympathetic, true-eyed and true-hearted, is the mother alike of literature and science; and just in so far as we are ourselves observers shall we be able to appreciate the art-work of science and the art-work of literature."

If a scientist wishes to describe an object well, he needs alertness of mind and senses, a receptive attitude, unprejudiced by any preconceived notions of what he wishes or expects a thing to be, or by any other personal element. He needs to see the thing just as it is objectively for every man. But he needs imagination enough to enable him, after he has selected the essentials from the facts reported by his senses, to reconstruct the object or phenomenon so that it will be clear to others. This demands accuracy and precision in observing, recording, and reporting. It is copy work. So far as it goes, it gives excellent training, both physical and mental. But there is a yet higher and finer kind of observation. Burroughs, himself a keen observer, says (Riverby, p. 119): "Observation is selective and detective. A real observation begets warmth and joy in the mind. To see things in detail as they lie about you and enumerate them is not observation; but to see the significant things, to seize the quick movement and gesture, to disentangle the threads of relation, to know the nerves that thrill from the cords that bind, or the typical and vital from the commonplace and mechanical—that it is to be an observer. It is to seize what is novel and characteristic in the scene about you—to drive the attention through the play at the surface and reach the rarer incidents beneath or beyond."

✓ The finest kind of observation is that which is stimulated by interest. When a man is interested in looking for a certain thing, he is much more likely to find it than is the chance passer-by, simply because he has all his senses keyed up for the impression of it. This is what is meant by selective observation. One who has gone on an expedition to study birds, or flowers, or stones, appreciates the fact that selective observation is of more value than the chance or miscellaneous because it means a greater concentration of both senses and imagination upon the few matters selected as essential. We very often altogether miss the sight of what we do not know beforehand to be visible.

✓ The power of seeing things is relative, not absolute: we see by what we have seen. Our passions, our interests, all our acquired habits of sensation, our settled moods, our innate and our cultivated tastes and likings tend to color every fresh impression. What we observe well is what interests us. But we are not bound down to old interests: we can add new ones at will. By deliberately attending to new things until a habit is formed, one can usually bring about in due time a feeling of keen, absorbing interest in the object to which he has faithfully attended. If this were not the case, educators would long ago have despaired of using anything but an elective system.

The trained observer has a cumulative advantage over the untrained. I flatter myself that I can perceive a locomotive that is whizzing by—and so I can, after a fashion—but a machinist or an engineer, examining the results of my observation, would be amused at the poverty of my perception. Even what seems to be direct observation from the outside world is often curiously compounded with past knowledge. An interesting illustration of this is the gradual growth of

appreciation of perspective as a truth of vision. Ruskin says: ¹

“A child, if asked to draw a house, lays down something like a T. He has no conception that the two lines thereof, which he knows to be level, produce upon his eye the impression of a slope. And the Chinese, children in all things, suppose a good perspective drawing to be as false as we feel their plate patterns to be, or wonder at the strange buildings which come to a point at the end.” Again, he points out how the want of shade in early works shows that the eye, without knowledge, cannot discover truth. “The eye of a Red Indian, keen enough to find the trace of his enemy or his prey, even in the unnatural turn of a trodden leaf, is yet so blunt to the impressions of shade, that Mr. Catlin mentions his once having been in great danger from having painted a portrait with the face in half-light, which the untutored observers imagined and affirmed to be the painting of half a face.”

The older we grow, the more associations we have, and the more meaning is given to each new sight and feeling. Every now and then some one will urge us to see things freshly and truly, as with the eyes of a little child. This is a pretty figure, but the advice is not very practical. The child often sees falsely through sheer ignorance, through lack of insight into meanings—because it has acquired nothing of importance with which to relate the new. It remains a fact that, the more we have seen and the deeper we have felt, the more broadly and truly we are capable of seeing and interpreting to others the meaning of our new experiences.

The feeling of the values of our sense-experience, its relation to our thought life and our emotions is, of course,

¹ Modern Painters, vol. 1, p. 54.

difficult to convey explicitly to others. Fortunately, what is needed in most cases is a hint, rather than a detailed account. On the basis of this hint the reader's imagination will reconstruct the whole experience, which will carry with it the actual feeling of its significance—provided always that the reader is sympathetic and the experience is one that is capable of being shared. The practice of successful descriptive writers, and notably that of Stevenson and Kipling, shows that to express one's experience in terms of concrete physical sensation wherever that is possible makes it easy for a reader to follow out the hint and enjoy the full imaginative and emotional impression. Often the mere naming of specific sensations will suffice to set in motion a whole train of images.

THE SENSE ELEMENT IN DESCRIPTION

DESCRIPTION is not by any means a modern art; for the earliest literatures can furnish many an instance of rapid, concentrated imaginative impressions; but there has been within the last few centuries a marked development in the direction of fulness and richness of material and vividness and concreteness of portrayal. The general tendency toward realism in all imaginative writing shows itself not only in the more frequent employment of description for the sake of background, but also in a special attitude on the part of the describer. Wealth of realistic detail cannot be secured without minute and thoughtful observation. The modern describer is keenly aware of the values of his sense impressions.

Perhaps the most striking development has been that of the color sense. People of the most varied tastes and occupations are now delighted by rich or delicate coloring; but this has apparently not always been the case. For example, Greek art and literature, so beautiful in other

respects—strikingly beautiful in reference to form—are decidedly lacking in color-appreciation. The color terminology of early poetry seems to us now not only shifting and inexact but often inexpressive, chosen apparently for its imaginative quality or its fitness to the verse rather than for any accuracy in its expression of the facts. Homer, for example, abounds in passages suggesting vividly and accurately details of sound and form and motion, but is sparing and somewhat indiscriminate in his use of color epithets. Almost every character mentioned has one or more associated epithets; but, except for the blue-eyed Minerva, there is almost no color suggestion in their physical description. We find belts shining with purple, and girdles silver-studded, but garments are for the most part merely bright, shining, or embroidered. Flowers and foliage are frequently referred to, but with practically no hint of color. The observation of color seems to have been limited in range. [Black, white, purple, red, and the metallic lustres seem chiefly to have caught the eye or impressed the imagination.] We read in the Iliad of the white city of Olooson, the white heights of Titanos, the black earth, the black water of the Aisepos, the black ship, the cloud black as pitch, the silvery-waved Peneios, of dark blood, black blood, purple blood—and also of dark, black, and purple death. The gleam of silver and gold and brass and of all sorts of polished surfaces is frequently referred to, and with some discrimination now and then. But colors in combination are nothing more than variegated. Wine is usually called dark-red; but the sea and the ivy are alike wine-colored, the wave, again, is purple, and the sand is green.

It is with the revival of letters that we first begin to find in literature a fresh and hearty enjoyment of color. The mediæval poet seems to have been more moved by colors and to have responded to his impressions with an

effort to reproduce them with some accuracy. Dante's description of the tint of apple-blossoms as "less than that of roses, but more than that of violets" has often been criticised for its inaccuracy. [Certainly it is not finally satisfying, but it is interesting just because it shows an effort at discrimination.]

From the Middle Ages to the present time there has been an ever-growing emphasis on color. Now the phenomenon has become a popular subject of physical, physiological, and psychological, as well as artistic, research. The strictly scientific study of colors might be expected to detract a little from their artistic appreciation, but it seems rather to have done this service: it has sharpened observation and perception of colors and has stimulated people to reflect on their psychological influences—a point of growing interest to the descriptive artist. This means simply the power color has to affect our imagination and our feelings. An instance of this is the fact that color associations spring up spontaneously in the minds of most of us—seemingly uncalled for—in connection with the most different things. Nearly every one is now aware, in some measure, of the feeling effect of colors, so that he gets the full force of Carlyle's epithet when he says, "It was a *meek yellow* evening," and of Hamlin Garland's when, describing the interior of a dreary farm-house, he calls it "a bare, blank, cold, *drab-colored* shelter from the rain, not a home."

The appreciation of color has opened up new fields for the descriptive artist, whether prose writer or poet. The popular "outdoor" writer revels in color. No small part of Ruskin's¹ descriptive force and beauty is to be traced

¹ Ruskin's minuteness of observation of colors is illustrated by the description of the mosses, p. 102; his use of them for pictorial effects in *Skies of a Day*, p. 170; and his impressionistic use of them, in his description of the Cathedral of St. Mark's, p. 181.

to his luxurious delight in [rich and delicate coloring.] Ruskin understands colors as an artist understands them; but he is not concerned merely with the reproducing of the colors to make a picture pleasing to the senses. Rather he uses them so that the reader may enter more sensibly and vividly into an imaginary scene and experience the appropriate emotions. Among modern poets, Shelley, Keats, Scott, and Tennyson are especially lavish in the use of colors—Shelley and Keats showing perhaps the most delicate and refined perception; Tennyson using colors as he uses sounds, as much for their imaginative and emotional, as for their visual, appeal; and Scott indulging in a bolder use of rich and even gorgeous hues to create a vivid picture. How dependent Scott's landscapes are upon color effects may be seen from a study of any of his longer narrative poems. It appears conspicuously throughout "The Lady of the Lake."

The pleasure of form, as compared with that of color, is more intellectual and less purely sensuous; for it springs from the perception of relations. It means an appreciation of symmetry, proportion, unity, and also variety of outline. There is, of course, a certain amount of sense enjoyment that may be derived from agreeable eye-movement. This would seem to be indicated by a somewhat general preference for horizontal lines, curves, continuous forms, and contour arrangements; and it might account in part for the tendency to group parts about a centre so as to give symmetrical balance. But there seems to be, very clearly, an intellectual pleasure as well, which is dependent upon a recognition of the relation of parts; that is, proportion. It is not necessary that the eye should sweep along the contour of a pyramid, a column, a tree, or even a human figure in order to apprise the mind of its symmetry. Such an impression may be gained from a single total visual impression when the eye is motionless.

The art forms in which we find delight, even when least conventional, have some sort of pleasing unity, but those of nature charm us by variety. There will always, of course, be those people who will lay off their lawns in walks, paths, and star-and-crescent flower-beds with mathematical precision, but the taste of even these would perhaps be offended if Nature had anticipated their little schemes and vented her beauties on them in such set designs. [Natural forms give only here and there, in unexpected places, an elusive suggestion of symmetry.] In describing them one should therefore be at pains not to convert their pleasing variety and irregularity of outline into stiff monotony, nor to subdue the ruggedness and strength of Nature into conventional prettiness. Good modern writers never do this. Shelley is as fond of prettiness in landscape as any poet well can be, and as much concerned over euphonious effects in diction; but that he does not ignore the poetical possibilities of wild and rugged landscape may be seen in his description of the ravine in "The Cenci" and in the passage from "Alastor" (page 77).

Vividness of portrayal of natural objects is greatly assisted by pictures or suggestions of (change and motion.) This is because motion is so bound up with life by our imaginations. We do not, like the ancients, tend to personify every moving object, and yet there is in the background of our consciousness some persistence of the childish notion that the moving object is alive. The value of motion as an element in description does not rest in the actual portrayal of a motion itself. It is doubtful, indeed, whether the average person, in picturing to himself a moving object, follows out its progress. Probably his most vivid picture is of the object in a state of arrested motion—such an attitude as a sculptor would intuitively seize upon for the suggestion of motion anticipated or

accomplished. The peculiar power of motion in description will be found to consist chiefly in the rousing of the sense of activity or life in the reader's idea of the object. The imaginative habit of seizing upon all possible suggestions of motion, and, in particular, the personifying tendency have left their imprint on the language. So that, with or without intent, the vivid describer frequently makes use of a vocabulary richly suggestive of motion. Thus John Van Dyke, in "The Dawn in Temperate Climates," says that the shafts of light are *shot up, reflected, bent, thrown back*, that they *strike the clouds*; the darkness *lifts into space*, the mists *stir*, the light *spreads and falls*, the hue *creeps down*, the color of the rose *leaps to a high pitch*, the poplar *shakes light* from its leaves.

{ Sound, like motion, adds vividness to portrayal. There may be the effort to describe the qualities of the sounds directly as in Burroughs' bird-chorus,¹ where, with painstaking accuracy, this keen observer has distinguished by carefully chosen epithets the voices of the various songsters. Or, interpretation may be added, as in his description of the cat-bird,² or as is usually the case in all descriptions of the human voice. Hawthorne, by his description of the erring preacher's voice,³ has managed to convey not merely a suggestion of character but a cry of the heart as well. Poe's description of the striking of the clock in "The Masque of the Red Death" is very clearly an impressionistic device. A few well-chosen epithets hint the quality of the sound; but the force of the passage lies entirely in its indirect suggestion by the effect upon the company, and its value for the story is simply that of inducing a [tragic mood by sound-suggestion.

If one wishes to describe sounds directly, he finds in

¹ Fresh Fields, p. 116.

² Wake-Robin: Among the Birds.

³ The Scarlet Letter, ch. 22.

language a very sympathetic medium. In studying descriptive diction it will be found that the English language is very rich in words that are clearly imitative, echoing the sense. Nowhere is this more striking than in the vocabulary of verbs, nouns, and adjectives applicable to sounds. Many of them carry the quality of the sounds immediately to the imagination, resulting in impressions as vivid, for all practical purposes, as if the appeal had come from the objects themselves through the sense of hearing. Most sound description is dependent in some measure for its vividness upon imaginative suggestiveness of (diction) rather than upon logical accuracy in naming the (quality of the sound.)

Sensations of odor and of taste are less frequently employed than other sense impressions in literary description. It is quite true that some of our poets, notably Shelley and Keats, have succeeded in playing upon these senses with some delicacy of suggestion; but there is always the danger, in dwelling on such sensations, of seeming rather epicurean, if not positively gluttonous. A common-sense ranking places taste and smell in the lowest part of the scale because their original purpose is utilitarian; they serve the animal nature of the individual. This is not so true of smell as it is of taste; but whatever refinement of æsthetic pleasure there may be in odors, the appeal is still at best chiefly sensuous. And it is exceedingly difficult to make literary use of it, because the sense of smell is highly individual. We have no generally recognized standards of good and bad smells. The fragrance of a flower that one delights in may prove very offensive to the olfactory organs of another. It is owing to these facts—that taste and smell are of the lower order of senses, and that they are highly individual—that so little use, comparatively, has been made of them in imaginative prose.] They are best employed

incidentally, as in Allen's description of the hemp field in "The Reign of Law" (pages 10-12) and of the Kentucky forest at the opening of "The Choir Invisible," where they serve to round out the experience into complete lifelikeness.

Now and then one finds a paragraph or two devoted to the material from one special sense, but normally description weaves together the various sense-impressions in something like the rich complexity of our actual experience. This is, after all, the real test of lifelikeness in the description of physical experiences—that all the concrete matters shall be so interwoven and so harmonized that the writer shall seem not to have been making a special study of color, or sound, or motion, or outline, but rather to be sharing with the reader an actual experience with the varied appeal it really made to him. Kipling's "The Time of New Talk" and Stevenson's "A Night among the Pines" show this intimate blending of all the sense-impressions into a single, continuous experience.

A study of masterpieces of description will inevitably lead to the conclusion that fine description rests upon fine observation as a basis; that details, though not necessarily numerous, bear evidence of having been accurately observed and finely selected, and that they are, moreover, presented in the concrete. Many of the finest emotional effects in the works of Stevenson and Kipling—master-describers, both—are only suggested through the concrete subject-matter directly dealt with. And how could it be otherwise? For the senses, however lowly we may be inclined to hold them, are, after all, the only pathway from one imagination to another.

IV. THE WORKING OVER OF MATERIALS

It has been seen that the first essential for descriptive writing is trained observation, without which the imagination cannot even supply such materials as shall have a universal appeal. But the ability to collect good materials is not by any means the whole equipment for descriptive work. Artistic imagination seldom aims at mere faithfulness in recording the objective facts; it nearly always gives prominence to the [special meaning that these facts have for the individual. It not only reproduces: it interprets, thus unifying the separate bits of experience and giving them character and individuality. Facts about people and things become literature only when some] person has been able to feel and interpret their significance.)

This interpretation depends, in the first place, upon those normal mental processes by which our experiences are sorted out. It is a progressive unifying and harmonizing of experience. First of all, the mind must work over into simplicity the masses of material thrust upon it by the senses. As has already been noted, observation itself is a selective process. One cannot attend to all the elements of his experience. [One's range of interests determines what he will observe most thoroughly; and what he observes most thoroughly is, as a rule, what he remembers best. The memory then continues the selective process, disengaging from the mass those elements of experience that are of lasting importance to the individual. It is a familiar fact that the concrete experiences of our past cannot be recalled in their entirety as continuous streams of impressions. Most of them, though they may have had their influence upon us, are quickly lost to consciousness. And those that we are able to recall have taken on a special character. The

features that interested us at first have been accented no less by musing recollection than by being isolated from what was dull or insignificant. These bits of our experience somehow take on a definite tone from the accompanying moods and feelings, and come, by an unconscious crystallization, to stand out in memory as distinct and unitary episodes. From this it will readily be inferred that material which has been lived through and worked over by the memory and the feelings is usually the most promising for literary description, not only because it has been made more distinct and unified through the selective action of memory, but because it has been enriched by manifold associations and has been brought into relation with human life. To travel about with a note-book in deliberate search of "local color" or any other kind of matter is merely to learn the A B C's of descriptive writing.

The final stages of simplifying and interpreting experience are dependent upon the imagination, which forms our mental pictures. The part that imagination plays, more or less unconsciously, in the acquiring of the knowledge we are pleased to call "abstract" is by no means small; but for any new and individual use of all those facts about the concrete world which daily press themselves upon us, imagination is essential. Even for the reproduction of experience, the picture-making faculty is necessary; but the work of imagination is not summed up in reproduction. The imagination spontaneously selects among the elements of our experience and combines them into new wholes, seemingly so fresh that we say they are original creations. To the imaginative person each new and interesting experience serves as a stimulus to a pleasurable activity of the mind by which, on the basis of that already known, he reaches over into the unknown, thus extending the range of his actual, indi-

vidual experience through an intuition of the universal experience of mankind.

The imaginative processes consist, first of all, of abstraction, selection, and re-combination. Abstraction is here never an end in itself; for the imagination is never, like the understanding, satisfied to rest in abstract thought. Fine discrimination and careful analysis of that which is worth preserving are only preparatory to the true work of imagination, which is, the seeing and showing of things in the concrete, as if they were real. Imagination first generalises, but only that it may in the end indulge in particulars; it abstracts from experience in order that it may create anew.

A further function of the imagination is the stamping of a special meaning by the harmonizing of details. This principle of selection must govern all artistic work. Ruskin says:

“There are few natural scenes whose harmonies are not conceivably improvable by banishment of some discordant point or by addition of some sympathetic ones. . . . The imagination will banish all that is extraneous, it will seize out of the many threads of different feeling which nature has suffered to become entangled, one only, and where that seems thin and likely to break, it will spin it stouter, and in doing this, it never knots but weaves in the new thread, so that all the work looks as pure and true as nature itself, and cannot be guessed from it but by its exceeding simplicity.”

The artist in description is under the same necessity of simplifying and harmonising his details; for this is his way of emphasizing values. It means an interpretation of experience, but it should not mean a falsification or distortion of the facts. In art, chiaroscuro and perspective

illustrate the recognition of the fact that the truth of things as they seem to the artist's eye is higher than the truth of things as they are in fact. The literary artist, too, must present the truth of things as they seem to him. His highest work is interpretative, the relating of the objective facts to the subjective world of thought and feeling.

[The personal element in description insures the harmonizing of details by wise omission and selection, as well as proper emphasis upon those details that the writer regards as most characteristic; and it furnishes, by interpretation, a point or central meaning which binds the parts together into a unitary experience. Finally, it adds that interest which always comes with the personal expression of experience; namely, an individual tone or style of presentation in harmony with the accompanying feeling.]

The tendency to introduce into description the human element of life and feeling is a wholesome one if not carried to excess; for it means an experienced, sympathetic way of looking at things, a blending of each fresh experience with our lives and personalities. Much of this blending is unconscious and inevitable. We all know how our moods and feelings—our general state of health, well-being, and happiness—color our whole view of life at any given time. The tendency to subjectify is often made use of for literary purposes. Not only our impressions, but even our moods and feelings are read into the object as its attributes. The endowing of such objects as could not possibly possess them with these attributes of thought and feeling has been called the *pathetic fallacy*. This expression is defined by Ruskin as a "falseness in all our impressions of external things," which, he says, is due to violent feeling. A familiar instance of the employment of such a fallacy as a dramatic device

for suggesting a state of mind is this passage from Tennyson's "Maud":

I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood.
Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-red heath.
The red-ribbed ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,
And Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers, "Death."

Here is an obvious warping and twisting of objects normally pleasing or neutral into harmony with the speaker's frame of mind. A falseness of this sort, says Ruskin, the greatest poets, when speaking in their own person (not dramatically), never admit. And because of this statement and of his prying analysis into the amount of naked truth to be found in several passages from great subjective poets, Ruskin is often cited as totally condemning the use of the pathetic fallacy. If this were the case, his own frequent employment of it in prose descriptions would be rather humorously inconsistent with his doctrine. But it should be noted that his strongest criticism of it is tempered by an admission of its possible value:

"The temperament which admits the pathetic fallacy, is . . . that of a mind and body in some sort too weak to deal fully with what is before them or upon them; borne away, or overclouded or overdazzled by emotion; and it is a more or less noble state, according to the force of the emotion which has induced it. Now so long as the feeling is true, we pardon, or are even pleased by, the confessed fallacy of sight which it induces."¹

When the emotion wholly justifies such means of expression, the "fallacy" ceases to be one for the sympathetic reader. The pathetic fallacy is offensive only when it is

¹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, v. 3, pt. 4, ch. 12. The discussion should be read entire, for any short quotation must fail to represent fairly the whole line of thought.

misleading or affected. It is, after all, only the extreme of subjective and personal interpretation, an extreme which must be justified by the individual occasion. The test of this way of putting experience must be applied by every reader for himself: it is simply the question whether, under the particular circumstances presented, the feeling of the writer seems sincere and reasonable.

Summing up on the author's attitude toward his materials, we find that, by going to the extreme of mere seeing, he gets purely objective description, concerned only with the facts; and, running to the opposite extreme of mere feeling, he gets purely subjective description, with the emphasis upon feelings and impressions. But the best literature is in its materials a combination and balance of both; for the sense-impressions of an object and the feelings roused by it are most intimately related.

V. SELECTION OF DETAILS FOR UNITY OF IMPRESSION

ONE of the most important problems in selecting material and determining upon a general method is, to decide upon the number and the nature of the details to be employed. The only kind of description that is exhaustive in the matter of detail is the scientific, which aims to give exact and thorough information. Such description is akin to exposition in its emphasis upon the facts and its exclusion of the personal point of view. In even the simplest kind of literary description, one who wishes, instead of enumerating facts about the nature of an object, to create an exact mental image of it, is usually obliged to discard a part of the material that has been furnished him by observation, for the sake of truth to the physical point of view. For the "word-painter" who attempts to use all the available facts about an object is as embarrassed as

an artist would be if he tried to sketch in six sides of a cube simply because he knew them to be there. If there were a possibility of squeezing all the facts into the description of an object, the result would be convincing to the intellect, but never to the imagination.

There is in the nature of the imagination an urgent reason for selection. Description is successful in so far as it succeeds in making new combinations of images already stored up in the minds of readers. But we do not remember all the details of an object unless we have deliberately attended to every part of it with a view to memorizing. The question is, then, what sort of details are most likely to persist in readers' minds? Because the mind selects from the images it receives of any object, and memory and imagination therefore respond less quickly to a long list of details than to a few strong hints, the method of description must somehow match the mental procedure by a selective process of its own. Hence the necessity, for vivid pictorial description, of brevity and of economy of detail, in the interest of a total visual impression. The tendency of beginners in description, especially if they are just coming to realize the importance of observation, is to overload with details. As Lowell says, "You cannot see their forest for their trees."¹

This is not intended to imply that details have in themselves no value. It is usually the significant detail, sharply noted by a keen observer and rendered with proper regard for its quality of picturesqueness or suggestiveness, that makes a description vivid and individual. Single details are often dwelt upon at length or thrust into prominent positions because of their individual interest. Thus, the sacred coat-tails of James Lane Allen's Kentucky gentleman² receive extraordinary

¹ Prose Works, v. 6, p. 74.

² Two Gentlemen of Kentucky.

emphasis. If one has a clear mental image of an object, he has necessarily a vivid conception of the details as well as of the whole. There is no question of excluding details—that would be impossible—but there is always a question as to how many and what sort of details should be regarded as representative of the object as a whole, and to what extent one can emphasize the values of striking details without detracting in any way from the reader's impression of the whole. It is a problem very similar to that which faces every artist of the brush, a problem which must be worked out afresh for every picture. Almost any artist would be willing to blot out the folds from the table-cloth in *The Last Supper* if he felt sure that their faithful rendering would distract attention from the faces and figures of the group. But it is not always easy to know in advance what will be the effect of minute care in portraying details. Ruskin says:¹

“The rapid and powerful artist necessarily looks with such contempt on those who seek minutiae of details rather than grandeur of impression, that it is almost impossible for him to conceive of the great last step in art, by which both become compatible. He has so often to dash the delicacy out of the pupil's work, and to blot out the details from his encumbered canvas; so frequently to lament the loss of breadth and unity and so seldom to reprehend the imperfection of minutiae, that he necessarily looks upon complete parts as the very sign of error, weakness, and ignorance. Thus, frequently to the latest period of his life, he separates, like Sir Joshua, as chief enemies, the details and the whole, which an artist cannot be great unless he reconciles; and because details alone, and unreferred to a final purpose, are the sign of a tyro's work, he loses sight of the remoter truth,

¹ *Modern Painters*, ed. 2, preface, p. 22.

that details perfect in unity, and contributing to a final purpose, are the sign of the production of a consummate master."

Interest in details and interest in the whole are by no means irreconcilable. The conserving of the whole impression demands only a very careful selection of such features as are not only interesting in themselves but richly suggestive of others and so characteristic of the whole. Many details are not worth while in literary description, because they are intrinsically commonplace, occurring in all members of the class and connoted by the object's very name. However essential these may be to one's conception of the object, one may safely leave them to the reader's imagination to supply, and thus save time for more distinctive features.

The literary describer is not often equally interested in all the parts of an object. He has selected for emphasis a single aspect of the whole: accordingly, he chooses such details as will suggest that aspect most vividly and economically. Force comes as a result of concentration upon main impressions. Wherever there is such selection with a view to special emphasis, the personal point of view appears. Often the choice and proportion of details furnish the index only to the describer's æsthetic interpretation; but sometimes there may appear an intellectual interpretation of a highly personal sort, as in Walter Pater's appreciative study of the face of Mona Lisa.¹

A still more personal type of description is that which penetrates by sympathy into the very heart of the object and frankly presents, in place of its primary attributes, the impressions made by it upon the describer. Here the details are harmonised with the chance mood or the set-

¹ The Renaissance: Leonardo da Vinci.

tled disposition of the writer, and only such are admitted as serve to justify his particular impression of the object and to reproduce this in the reader's mind. This may fairly be called impressionistic description. It is, so far as the object is concerned, an indirect method of presentation; and its effectiveness will depend upon wise choice of details for conveying the desired impression and upon suggestiveness of style.

For any kind of personal or subjective description, the writer must have a strongly marked general impression—sensuous, imaginative, or emotional—which he could, if necessary, formulate. Most of us form such impressions, especially of new experiences; but it is often difficult to revive first impressions vividly and accurately unless imagination assists us in recalling the experience entire.

The general impression may or may not be definitely phrased in the description. If it is made explicit, it is best presented first or last. In contradiction to the customary demands of the principle of emphasis by climax, descriptive writers often prefer to note the main impression in the beginning rather than at the close. The first method has two distinct advantages: first, it aids clearness, inasmuch as it furnishes at once a grouping principle, so that the successive details can be fitted into the general impression as soon as they are presented, without any necessity for reconstructing the image; and, secondly, it lessens the probability of a stiff general summary at the close. In Ruskin's description of St. Mark's the impression, being very complex, is not precisely indicated. Yet even amid the wealth of details the cathedral somehow takes on a sort of unity of impression, chiefly, but not altogether, physical. A similar unifying principle is the suggestion of the accompanying feeling, as in Ruskin's *The Old Tower of Calais Church*. In Irving's reminiscent sketch of Westminster Abbey the

mood of the observer continually plays over the description. We may note here many impressionistic devices for emphasizing the mood. The weather is appropriately sober, even melancholy. The gloom of the declining year, suggestive as it is of death, has still, like the ruins of the abbey itself, something of mournful magnificence. The mind of the reader is gradually prepared for its impression of the abbey by the passage through the shadowy vaults. All the details noted are such as would induce a mood of solemn contemplation. The inscriptions on the monuments are coated by heavy moss; the walls, old and crumbling, are discolored by age; and, to emphasize the gloom, we have a single flash of light from the outer world, a yellow autumnal ray of sun shining into the dark passages with dusky splendor. Each new detail is a fresh reminder of death and of eternity. The visitor is startled to hear the reverberations of the abbey clock "sounding among the tombs and telling the lapse of the hour, which, like a billow, has rolled us onwards toward the grave." The interior of the abbey at once impresses him with its magnitude, inspiring in him a mysterious awe. It seems as if the awful nature of the place, the death-like repose, is made more impressive by contrast, first, with the slight sounds heard from the world without, and then with the sudden melody from the organ, whose mounting chords soar about the lofty vaults. The last note having died away, the visitor is again seized by the spirit of the place and lapses into reverie: "Sad and fugitive is the homage of mankind."

In this description of Irving's we see the most prominent characteristics of impressionistic work: the subdual of details to the whole impression, and the recurring of the main notes with the effect of a refrain. Impressionistic description may show omission, suppression, or subdual of unimportant or incongruous details, and a de-

liberate heightening of significant features by proportion, by emphatic position, and often by a recurring reference.

Such strongly centralized description is especially useful as furnishing harmonious background for a certain type of novel and short-story—the somewhat artificial type that aims at unity of impression rather than mere realism. One may find it of interest to study the settings used by Scott, George Eliot, Stevenson, Kipling, Hardy, Meredith, Blackmore, Poe, and Garland, and note the varying degrees of impressionism. The background of Hardy's "The Return of the Native" shows the utmost that can be expected of description as an accessory to the novelist's art. An elaborate short-story setting of the impressionistic type is the introduction to Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," which strikes the tragic note to which the whole is keyed.

"During the whole of a dull, dark, soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was, but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable, for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest images of the desolate and terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant, eye-like windows—upon a few white sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of a

reveler upon opium—the bitter lapse into every-day life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought, which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. . . . It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate, its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting on this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled luster by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than before—upon the remodeled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant, eye-like windows.”¹

Comparing this with ordinary landscape description, we find that impressionistic description of any sort calls for special skill. Merely to enumerate the objects in a landscape requires little more than accurate observation, intelligence, and a good vocabulary. Such a description as Poe's calls for *feeling*, *imagination*, and a knowledge of the principles of descriptive writing. More than that: it calls for taste and a fine sense of proportion.

The ideal in impressionistic description is, to have all the details strongly controlled by unity. The difficulty in attaining this ideal lies in the danger of the evidence of effort, and of crude rather than delicate persistence of emphasis upon a single aspect. There is always the possibility of unpleasant monotony if a single note is twanged persistently, and the chance that a highly impressionistic description may degenerate into unintentional caricature. Not that caricature is not legitimate—but it is limited to special purposes, if not indeed to special subjects and

¹ From Poe's *Tales*, by permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

special readers. Young people, who usually prefer strong emphasis to quieter effects of humor, delight in caricature. Irving's description of Ichabod and his gallant steed, George Eliot's description of Mrs. Crackenthorp, and caricatures such as abound in the works of Dickens are pleasing enough in their way. But the method is not often successfully applied to major characters unless the intention of the whole is pure burlesque. In serious writings an unintentional approach to caricature may become unpleasant, especially in long sustained description. The extremity of impressionism may be illustrated by the opening of Dickens's "Little Dorrit":

"Thirty years ago Marseilles lay burning in the sun, one day.

"A blazing sun upon a fierce August day was no greater rarity then, than at any other time, before or since. Everything in Marseilles, and about Marseilles, had stared at the fervid sky, and been stared at in return, until a staring habit had become universal there. Strangers were stared out of countenance by staring white houses, staring white walls, staring tracts of arid road, staring hills from which verdure was burnt away. The only things to be seen not fixedly staring and glaring were the vines drooping under their load of grapes. These did occasionally wink a little, as the hot air barely moved their faint leaves.

"There was no wind to make a ripple on the foul water within the harbor, or on the beautiful sea without. The line of demarcation between the two colours, black and white, showed the point which the pure sea would not pass; but it lay as quiet as the abominable pool, with which it never mixed. Boats without awnings were too hot to touch; ships blistered at their moorings; the stones of the quays had not cooled, night or day, for

months. Hindoos, Russians, Chinese, Spaniards, Portuguese, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Genoese, Neapolitans, Venetians, Greeks, Turks, descendants from all the builders of Babel, come to trade at Marseilles, sought the shade alike—taking refuge in any hiding-place from a sea too intensely blue to be looked at, and a sky of purple, set with one great flaming jewel of fire.

“The universal stare made the eyes ache. Towards the distant line of Italian coast, indeed, it was a little relieved by light clouds of mist, slowly rising from the evaporation of the sea; but it softened nowhere else. Far away the staring roads, deep in dust, stared from the hillside, stared from the hollow, stared from the interminable plain. Far away the dusty vines overhanging wayside cottages, and the monotonous wayside avenues of parched trees without shade, drooped beneath the stare of earth and sky. So did the horses with drowsy bells, in long files of carts, creeping slowly towards the interior; so did their recumbent drivers when they were awake, which rarely happened; so did the exhausted labourers in the fields. Everything that lived or grew, was oppressed by the glare, except the lizard passing swiftly over rough stone walls, and the cicada, chirping his dry, hot chirp, like a rattle. The very dust was scorched brown, and something quivered in the atmosphere as if the air itself were panting.

“Blinds, shutters, curtains, awnings, were all closed and drawn to keep out the stare. Grant it but a chink or keyhole, and it shot in like a white-hot arrow. The churches were the freest from it. To come out of the twilight of pillars and arches—dreamily dotted with winking lamps, dreamily peopled with ugly old shadows piously dozing, spitting, and begging—was to plunge into a fiery river, and swim for life to the nearest strip of shade. So, with people lounging and lying wherever

shade was, with but little hum of tongues or barking of dogs, with occasional jangling of discordant church bells, and rattling of vicious drums, Marseilles, a fact to be strongly smelt and tasted, lay broiling in the sun one day."

Admitting that the details of this description are excellently chosen with a view to unity of impression, that they are artistically accumulated, and that they actually do affect to an extraordinary degree the reader's eye-balls and his lining membrane so that he would fain cry out for shade and water, one may still feel that the emphasis is overdone. There is no relief. The reader is fairly floored by the impression. It is interesting to compare with this scene from Dickens a description from Kipling's "The Man Who Would Be King":¹

"It was a pitchy-black night, as stifling as a June night can be, and the *loo*, the red-hot wind from the westward, was booming among the tinder-dry trees and pretending that the rain was on its heels. Now and again a spot of almost boiling water would fall on the dust with the flop of a frog, but all our weary world knew that that was only pretense. It was a shade cooler in the press room than in the office, so I sat there, while the type clicked and clicked, and the night-jars hooted at the windows, and the all but naked compositors wiped the sweat from their foreheads, and called for water. The thing that was keeping us back, whatever it was, would not come off, though the *loo* dropped and the last type was set, and the whole round earth stood still in the choking heat, with its finger on its lip, to wait the event. I drowsed, and wondered whether the telegraph was a blessing, and whether this dying man, or struggling people, might be aware of the inconvenience the delay was causing. There was no special reason beyond the heat and worry to make ten-

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sion, but, as the clock hands crept up to three o'clock and the machines spun their fly-wheels two and three times to see that all was in order, before I said the word that would set them off, I could have shrieked aloud."

Kipling gets quite as strong an effect as Dickens, and gets it more rapidly. His method is suggestive rather than cumulative. Theoretically one might suppose that, so long as details are strongly controlled by unity of impression, there is no limit to the number that may be safely introduced. But one tires at last of even a good thing. Such art as that of Dickens shows a distinct advance over that of many earlier novelists; but it is, after all, only a stage in the evolution of descriptive art. Kipling and Stevenson will probably, by historians, be ranked no higher than Dickens for their contribution to the development of the English novel; but they have still very much surpassed him in descriptive skill, as they have in general technique. Their effects are more subtly gotten. Having at hand the greatest possible wealth of material, modern descriptive artists of the highest class seem to be exerting themselves chiefly in the art of hinting. How much of this excellent material can I safely leave to the reader's imagination, and how can I most rapidly and economically suggest it? seems to be the question now, rather than, How many details can I squeeze in without overcrowding, and how flatly and how often dare I insist upon my main impression?

The tendency to realism has meant a greater richness and variety of material to choose from. But there has been recently, to some extent, a return to the methods of the earliest describers in the matter of economy of detail: so that one may find in the most imaginative modern writers many a vivid flash of description as quick and sure as those rare glimpses in the classic poets. In subjective

description, where the author tries to interpret the character of the object or show how it affects his imagination or appeals to his mood, there are two general methods of procedure. One may accumulate harmonious details and weave in the subjective impressions, as in Dickens's "Marseilles" and Irving's "Westminster Abbey," or one may do as Dickens does in his most concentrated descriptions—reduce the essential nature of the object to its lowest terms, naming only what are regarded as the most characteristic or striking features. The latter method of interpreting, being the simplest, has been practised from the earliest times and is still employed by the bolder geniuses. The value of the rapid flashes of description lies in the sparing of details already familiar to the reader's mind, concentrating on the single part or quality most vividly felt, and expressing it in a live word or phrase, often figurative. If this can be done successfully, detail is, of course, superfluous. But this is, strictly speaking, suggestion rather than description proper. It requires the ability to imply the whole object in one or a few strong traits. The difference between this method and that of the fuller impressionistic description may be seen by comparing Dickens's "In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast, substantial smile" with any of his fuller caricatures, say, for example, his sketch of Miss Peecher, the little school-mistress.

Epithet is ~~one~~ of the earliest methods of description. Homer's silver-footed Thetis, swift-footed Achilles, laughter-loving Aphrodite, far-darting Apollo, and rosy-fingered Dawn are familiar to us all. Such epithets furnish little descriptive news, but occasionally prove richly suggestive to the imaginative mind. The older poets trusted largely to the reader's ability to make a picture on the basis of mere hints. The practice has not been abandoned, but is used side by side with the fuller description. Often a

modern prose writer creates a vivid picture with one or two strokes of the brush, as when Hardy describes the bonfires seen on Egdon Heath: "Some were Maenades, with winy faces and blown hair."

If one goes to the extreme of subjectivity in descriptive writing, the result is a kind of suggestion of the actual traits of the object in a round-about manner, by presenting their effect upon other objects, other persons, or the describer himself. Description by effect is a sort of reflection of the traits, a dramatic means of suggestion. It is useful wherever direct description is difficult or undesirable, as for example in the presentation of objects too powerful, too terrible, or too beautiful to admit of outright description without a visible straining of the style. The possibility of indirect suggestion of the causes of the greater emotions has long been recognized as a principle in painting as well as in description. Thus the inspired Raphael in his "Transfiguration" suggests through the attitudes of the persons in the picture—the prostrate forms, the shaded eyes, the garments blown about by the divine afflatus—a splendor too dazzling for possibility of portrayal. One of the purest examples of description by effect is the passage in which Shakespeare suggests the height of Dover Cliff by the effect of distance upon the apparent sizes of objects seen below, and upon the physical sensations of the observer:

How fearful

And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles; halfway down
Hangs one that gathers samphire,—dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice; and yond tall, anchoring bark,
Diminished to her cock; her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight; and the murmuring surge,

That on th' unnumbered idle pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high.—I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.

Poe uses a similar device a number of times in his remarkably vivid description of the descent into the Maelström. Kipling, in his "Kim" suggests the quality of the Queen of Delhi's voice, and Hawthorne, in "The Scarlet Letter," that of Dimmesdale, by noting the effects upon the listeners. In the same way Irving portrays, in "Rip Van Winkle," a shrewish woman through the attitude of her husband and his dog:¹

"Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ear about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that by frequent use had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife, so that he was fain to draw off his forces and take to the outside of his house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a henpecked husband.

"Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much henpecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked

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upon Wolf with an evil eye as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods, but what courage can withstand the ever-doing, and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house, his crest fell, his tail dropped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation."

The portrayal of traits by effect has the advantage of all dramatic presentation: it is more convincing, because we seem to see the results and so may do our own inferring of the causes.

VI. THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

THE chief organizing principle in descriptive writing, as in all composition, is that of unity. But here unity means something other than logical relevance. An inventory or catalogue of all the details actually belonging to an object has a certain unity of thought, but it may or may not succeed in conveying a single total impression. In the simpler, more objective kind of description, a rapid suggestion of the appearance of the whole is often sufficient to bind the parts together; but in artistic description the problem is not so simple. The unity that is aimed at in literary description is not capable of being strictly analyzed; it usually does not reveal itself perfectly in any summary of the content; and yet, however subtle, it is a principle which definitely controls the whole composition. Often it is an imaginative or emotional unity of

impression showing itself in the selection of harmonious details and suppression of the incongruous and insignificant. Sometimes it is so quietly pervasive that it can only be felt and never directly traced to any special method or device.

But whether the impression the author seeks to make is visual, intellectual, or emotional, the singleness of it is of extreme importance. And herein lies the peculiar difficulty of description. It endeavors, by means of details named in succession, to create the illusion of an object seen and experienced as a whole. Now in real life, although our whole impressions are only the resultant of a combination of details apprehended singly or a few at a time, yet the working over of these individual items into a whole impression is so unconscious and so nearly instantaneous that it often seems to us as if we got the general impression first and then turned our attention to detail after detail hitherto unperceived. So that many descriptive writers employ the order of movement from the general to the particular with the effect of great naturalness.

Much has been made of the difficulty in securing a unified impression through enumeration in time and by words. One writer deplors the working-tool, language, "employed to do what more naturally belongs to the brush or the chisel." Another regards it as an almost hopeless task to make the reader carry in his mind a number of traits until he can gain the whole impression. Lessing is moved to argue in favor of either the brief, epithet description or that narrative description which frankly turns a limitation to an excellence. The lessons to be learned from a consideration of this initial difficulty of description are these: first, that description must not attempt to rival the brush or the chisel but must do the kind of thing that can best be done with words; and,

second, that it may seize upon all the changing aspects which are worth presenting and so endow the object with life and interest and create the illusion of reality. It has already been noted that description does not try merely to give eye-pictures. If it did, it would be but a poor art by the side of painting. It does not always or even usually aim to create a single definite visual image, fixing the object as it is at one point of time. In its own field it has some peculiar advantages. The chief one arises from the fact that, even in its most pictorial aspect, it is addressed not to the eye, but to the visual imagination, and that, because of this fact, many details which are common and familiar or of little interest but which in a painting must perforce be represented can be spared in a description. Thus a greater sharpness and simplicity of outline can be secured in a "word-picture," and an infinitely wider range is given in the matter of subjective interpretation through the greater ease in indicating emphatically the one main impression by suppressing or subordinating the incongruous and unessential, and by accumulating and insisting upon details regarded as essential.

The first principle to be kept in mind is one deduced from the working of the imagination; namely, that unity of impression is better secured by insistence on sharp, bold outlines, and that it is frequently defeated by accumulation of minor details such as are difficult to hold in mind and embarrassing to put together. Does the principle of unity, then, set a limit to the desirable length and complexity of description? No arbitrary limit, certainly. A ten-page description of a landscape may be as effective as a two-page one in the matter of unity of impression; but the chances are against it. The limit is a common-sense one, which every writer should apply for himself, using his judgment as to the

possibility of his reader's holding in a single imaginative grasp the details he desires to furnish. Though one can prescribe no definite limits as to the amount or variety of matter safely to be included in the description of any single object, yet it may easily be discovered that the majority of successful descriptive sketches are not very long. Excellent as are some of Scott's descriptions of personages, castles, and general scenery, one could conceive their being better yet if they were more economical of detail. One who is reading Scott's narrative for the story's sake and finds himself halted at the opening of many a chapter to survey a castle in minute detail, or in the middle of an incident ripe for climax, to observe the size and shape of the shoe-buckles of a man who has just stepped into the room and promises to do or say something important as soon as his costume has made its due impression, may be reminded of Jules Lemaitre's remarks on Zola's views of Paris: "These descriptions, of which the shortest occupies at least ten pages of print, have become famous. Everybody admires them greatly, in most cases without having read them." The reason for the preference for short descriptions in a piece of fiction is simply its subordinate and contributory character, a recognition of which has led some of our most skilful novelists to present description largely in solution. But more cogent still is the necessity of rapid suggestion for the sake of insuring a single total impression. So far as unity alone is concerned, the fewer the details a description contains, while conveying the essentials, the better the chances of success. This does not preclude the possibility of richness of effect; for it is a well known fact that the reader finds it easier and pleasanter to supply a gap by exercising his imagination along a suggested line than to blend together harmoniously a multitude of trifling details.

The principles of structure in descriptive writing are very closely bound together. The effect of unity is not solely a matter of number and variety of details, but is very dependent upon plan and grouping.

One of the chief means of conserving unity is by regarding the object from a definite point of view. Considering first pictorial description, one must at once admit the necessity of this for any definite visualizing. The point of view determines the boundaries of the scene, the amount and nature of detail to be included; and it even affects the appearance of the object. Truth to point of view means the use of only such details as can be observed from a given station and the presenting of them just as they would naturally appear from that station.

The point of view may or may not be definitely announced. To do so tends to clarify the description, accounting for the inclusion or exclusion of detail, and placing the reader at the same imaginary station from which the writer views the picture. The average description, however, seems to be from all points or no point of view, because of a very human inclination to shirk the labor of definite visualizing. It is often easier to write from our understanding of the properties or qualities of an object than from our visual or imaginative impression. Young children like to draw a house showing three sides and the top: they even shamelessly reveal the furniture as showing through the walls. And many a grown-up flagrantly violates the point of view. A novelist has his heroine come up the road in the twilight. The hero, gazing down at her from the top of a high hill, notes, the instant she appears in sight, that "some creamy garden roses are dying in her hair." What he really sees, of course, is an irregular white blotch on her head; but that doesn't sound pretty. A careful study of Hawthorne's "Sights from a Steeple" will show the inclusion of numerous

details which could not possibly be observed under the conditions given, even making allowance for the spy-glass device. It will show also a peculiar proportion of objects, due to the use of at least two scales of measurement. It seems that superfluous hair-powder on a man's coat-collar can be seen without effort at some distance; but it is difficult to distinguish between soldiers and school-boys on the street below. Hawthorne would probably not have been distressed by this discrepancy if he had noticed it. He seems to have tried not so much to create a definite picture as to give a sense of the dramatic clashing of the various interests of life as represented by typical personages who meet at the cross-roads. The steeple-device is not so useful, then, for the sake of visualizing a scene as for the sake of unifying a series of philosophical impressions. The sketch is an essay translated into concrete form.

When a writer does try to make us visualize definitely, we have a right to demand that he do it first himself; if he seems to prescribe for us a station, he should establish himself there first. Violation of this principle is easily felt by any critical reader, yet the error is common even among good writers. So excellent a describer as Hardy is tempted, in a night scene, to intrude a little knowledge of the facts.

"The coming night gradually obscured the chimneys; but the position of the sequestered little world could still be distinguished by a few faint lights, winking more or less ineffectually through the leafless boughs, and the undiscerned songsters they bore, in the form of balls of feathers, at roost among them."

How much truer, imaginatively, is the same author's brief description of Giles in the cedar-tree:

"The mist had so thickened that he could only just be

discerned as a dark gray spot in the light gray sky; he would have been altogether out of notice but for the strokes of his bill hook and the flight of a bough."

The same restraint, which forbids an elaboration of details not observable under the conditions, is shown in Taine's description of the interior of a Strasburg cathedral seen in a dim light, where he refers to the "grand carvings which one is permitted only to imagine." This mere hint is pardonable.

An excellent object-lesson on adherence to point of view is Poe's description of the Maelström, where the reader is first permitted to view the whirlpool from the top of a high cliff some distance away, then carried with the narrator on a boat which gradually approaches the swirl, and finally, caught in the eddying waters, is borne down the spiral descent. In the first instance the station forbids details; so, from the top of Helseggen, "a broad belt of gleaming spray" and "the smooth, shining, jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of forty-five degrees" are all of the vortex that can be clearly seen. The second point of view permits any amount of detail; yet with singular skill Poe introduces minutiae only gradually. We see first the "ebony sides of the funnel and the gleaming and ghastly radiance of the water," then the various objects which have been similarly caught in the embrace of the whirl, and then, finally, the varying motions of special objects being carried downward, such as the fir tree and the wreck of the Dutch merchantman.

The physical point of view is sometimes thought of as a station in space alone, but we may well include some consideration of times and seasons and such attendant circumstances as are capable of altering the physical aspects of the object. It is no drawback to the Eve of St. Agnes that the poet has thrown rose and amethyst

lights upon the fingers and the silver cross of his virgin. It does not matter here whether the pale moon gleaming through the stained figures of the casement actually has the power to transfer their hues to any object—indeed, it makes no special difference in such a poem whether the rose and amethyst lights have a falsely suggested source or any source at all. They are there, we see them, and they are beautiful. But the prose writer is, as a rule, held more accountable for facts. He is distinctly in error when he speaks of a flock of ordinary sheep on a hillside close at hand as looking like “balls of snow” or sentimentalizes over a “silver thread” winding through the landscape when he means to indicate a broad and muddy river a few rods away.

Professor Bates, in his “Talks on Writing English” (page 187), has called attention to Goethe’s criticism of Scott’s proneness to elaborate as causing him now and then to violate the point of view. Goethe says:

“It is a peculiarity of Walter Scott’s that his great talent in representing details often leads him into faults. Thus in ‘Ivanhoe’ there is a scene where they are seated at a table in a castle-hall, at night, and a stranger enters. Now, he is quite right in describing the stranger’s appearance and dress, but it is a fault that he goes to the length of describing his feet, shoes, and stockings. When we sit down in the evening and some one comes in, we notice only the upper part of his body. If I describe the feet, daylight enters at once, and the scene loses its nocturnal character.”

But the force of this criticism seems to lie not in the fact that daylight is required, but in the fact that the observation of the feet of the visitor under all the circumstances that Scott has chosen is unnatural. It violates the mental point of view quite as much as it does the physical.

It is inartistic to admit many of those details which do exist in the object but have in themselves no special interest or value and are inharmonious or incongruous with the whole impression. If such details cannot be made to serve the purposes of background, relief, or contrast, they are useless for any but scientific description, which must report the facts impartially. For literary work, they may be either reconciled or omitted whenever the inclusion of them threatens to violate the mood or tone of the description. Let it be again recalled that the highest unity in literary description is not that of logical relevance of all the subject-matter, nor even that which is to be secured by a definite visualizing of an object from one station in time and space, but a unity of tone and feeling, which is secured only by the artist who is so keenly aware of the exact imaginative impression he desires to convey that he cannot admit into his own conception any foreign or distracting matter. Hawthorne's description of the garden of poison flowers in "Rappaccini's Daughter," Poe's initial description in "The Fall of the House of Usher," and the series of descriptions in "The Masque of the Red Death," and Tennyson's "Mariana," illustrate this absolute singleness of mood and tone. These descriptions may strike some readers as a trifle too artificial, but the methods by which their effects are produced are still worth study.

Unity and coherence are alike aided by the employment of some sort of framework to hold the parts together. Sometimes a fundamental image of the object suggests itself as a device for binding together the details in proper order. Such a grouping device is not always necessary, but it is useful when one wishes to give exact, detailed information about the appearance of a natural object of some size or complexity. In describing the battle of Waterloo, Hugo uses to good advantage the capital A

as a sort of ground map on which details may be located:

“Those who wish to form a clear idea of the battle of Waterloo need only imagine a capital A laid on the ground. The left stroke of the A is the Nivelles road, the right one the Genappe road, while the cross-stroke of the A is the broken road running from Ohain to Braine L’Alleud. The top of the A is Mont St. Jean, where Wellington is; the lower left point is Hougomont, where Reille is with Jerome Bonaparte; the right lower point is La Haye Sainte; and in the centre of the cross-stroke is the exact spot where the battle was concluded.

“The triangle contained at the top of the A between the two strokes and the cross is the plateau of Mont St. Jean. The dispute for this plateau was the whole battle. The wings of the two armies extend to the right and the left. Behind the point of the A is the forest of Soignies.”

Here the details are taken up in order, as one would follow the outlines of a map or chart. This method insures clearness, but is almost of necessity stiff and formal. It is chiefly to be found in descriptions whose aim is at least in part didactic; and its best use is in assisting a reader to bind together masses of details in their proper space relations. The fundamental image may, however, be suggested without being so formally or so frequently referred to, as where Stevenson, in describing the Bay of Monterey, likens the outline of the coast to a fishing-hook, or where Ruskin likens the church of Santa Croce to the letter T, or where Motley, before describing the city in detail, says the picturesque streets of Brussels “rose up the steep sides of the hill like the semicircles and stairways of an amphitheatre.” Gibbon describes Byzantium as being in the form of an unequal triangle,

and then locates the details. The harbor of Constantinople he likens to the horn of a stag or of an ox.

Less marked than such a device as this is the ordinary method of impressionistic description, that of mentioning explicitly or vividly suggesting the general aspect of the whole. Coming, as it usually does, either first or last, this suggestion of the whole impression serves to organize the reader's imaginative and emotional conception in very much the same way as the fundamental image and set framework serve to organize the purely pictorial or the didactic description.

The coherent ordering of details in description is no less important than in other kinds of writing, but is a new problem. The consecutiveness of a piece of descriptive writing is, in a sense, not so rigid as that in an argumentative or expository work. The thought is not, as a rule, developed serially for any length of time. We have in description masses of detail all contributing more or less directly to a main impression. Clearly there is not often one and only one logical order of detail discoverable. Yet there must be some order wherever one does not wish his description to appear chaotic.

The question immediately suggests itself to the methodical person: Is it desirable, in practice, to outline descriptive material rigidly? It may be answered that it is seldom necessary save in cases of very extensive or complex objects. If a description is not uncomfortably long, the describer can usually carry the points in his head in proper order. Of course, if one has the outlining habit, he may find it fun to codify his points. A student, allowed to select a subject for literary "appreciation," once submitted an outline of "L'Allegro." If outlining continues to be taught with care, perhaps we shall some day have a dew-drop neatly diagrammed. The reason why a formal written outline is not usually desirable for brief descrip-

tions is that it almost invariably petrifies them. It is wise, as Professor Baldwin says, to "have an order, and keep it, but say as little as possible about it." What shall that order be?

In the case of moving, changing objects, as, for example, in the chariot race in "Ben Hur" or in the description of the tournaments in "Ivanhoe," the time order suggests itself at once as the only fit organizing principle. Lessing, in his "Laocoön," commenting on the descriptive art of Homer, fully emphasizes the value of narrative description, which carries with it the time order of necessity. The same method, in combination with some other, may control the order of details in what is sometimes called the "traveller's description," where successive points of view are adopted, as, for example, in observing a strip of mountain scenery, the objects along a city street or forest path, the exterior and interior of a house—in short, in handling any scene so extensive as to make a flat presentation of all the details from one point of view impossible, inconvenient, or unnatural. Vastness or complexity of an object, as well as change in time, may make a narrative movement advisable.

Another principle of grouping, which may be applied independently or in combination with some other, is that of the actual space order,—proceeding from point to point in the outline of the object. When taken as the sole grouping principle, it does not recommend itself for emphasis, but it may excellently conserve coherence. It is a neat, methodical procedure, useful in giving exact information, as, for instance, where a historian is giving a detailed account of the appearance and nature of a city. The only objections to it are that it may prove stiff, and it is pretty sure to level all the details to one rank unless special means of securing emphasis are employed. A glaring violation of the principle of space grouping is,

however, often offensive and confusing. A student in describing a squirrel noted details in this order: color, claws, hair, legs, eyes, ears, tail, and jaw. This is too capricious and uncomfortable to follow. It is distracting to skip about from part to part unless special reason can be made to appear for the transfer of attention. If one wishes to make a definite pictorial image in the reader's mind, the space order can never be entirely ignored. Within this limitation, there is still considerable range in the ordering of details. One's view may be directed from below up, as in Ruskin's description of the exterior of St. Mark's, or from above down, as when looking from a height; it may move from right to left or left to right, from background to foreground, or the reverse.

With the space order is frequently combined a somewhat more artificial order, for the sake of emphasis. In landscape some central or outstanding object may be presented near the beginning, and the details located with reference to it. Motley so describes the city of Brussels in "The Rise of the Dutch Republic," using as his point of reference the remarkably high tower of the town house, a "miracle of needlework in stone." This, it will be observed, is a combination of a psychological principle with the space order, so as to bring early into prominence such details as would naturally first attract the eye of an observer.

One may depart further from the space order and substitute for it the order of his perception of the object. This may, of course, happen to coincide with the space order at times, but it usually varies somewhat, inasmuch as one's special interests or his habits of observation lead him to perceive some parts of the object more readily and eagerly. Miss Buck and Mrs. Morris go so far as to say:¹ "Description, then, is successful just so far as it

¹ Expository Writing, p. 25.

follows the actual order of the sensuous experience it describes." But this seems to be a principle true in the main but not deserving to be pushed to extremities. The actual order of perception is, owing to individual peculiarities, frequently whimsical and erratic; and there is not any good reason for forcing the reader to follow it if, as often happens, a more reasonable order can be invented. The attention of the observer is often claimed at first by what proves to him, on reflection, an insignificant detail, so insignificant that he may not even care to remember it at all. Must he place that detail first, regardless of the undue emphasis so thrust upon it? Must he even include it at all? If the first thing one observes on entering a room is a flapping window-curtain or a newspaper on the floor, are these of necessity the best items to begin with in description? And, even if one should first observe what, on reflection, proves to be the point which best deserves the emphasis of the description, is there any rule of composition which requires that this be placed first? The authors quoted above use Ruskin's description of St. Mark's as an illustration of the desirability of following the actual order of perceptions. The illustration works very well up to a certain point. But let us consider the means Ruskin uses in throwing the cross into prominence. It will be observed that the form of the cross is first roughly suggested in the outline of the building, but this is not where the symbol receives its greatest emphasis. We find later that "mazes of interwoven lines and changeful pictures lead always at last to the cross, lifted and carved in every place and upon every stone," and at the end of the paragraph, "it is the cross that is first seen, and always, burning in the centre of the temple; and every dome and hollow of its roof has the figure of Christ in the utmost height of it, raised in power, or returning in judgment." Now, even if Ruskin had not explicitly stated

that the cross was first seen, it would be inconceivable that, if it was so prominent as it seems to have been, he could have run his eye over the vast amount of detail that he suggests—the forms of dragons and serpents, the fountains, vases, interwoven lines, and changeful pictures before he saw the cross. If his object had been to report his perceptions in order, as for an experiment in a psychological laboratory, he might have said something of this sort: The interior of the church was so dark that, until my eye accustomed itself to the twilight, I could see very little. After noting the general structure so far as it asserted itself in the obscurity, and tracing to its source what little light there was, my eye was at once caught by a cross “on the great rood before the altar, raised in bright blazonry against the shadow of the apse.” But instead of this, Ruskin observes what seems a reasonable order of sense perception long enough to secure the illusion of an actual experience on the reader’s part. He then proceeds, whether instinctively or deliberately, to develop an ~~artistic climax~~. So every imaginative writer will adapt his order to his purpose.

~~Some concern~~ should be had for the reader’s ease in constructing the image. He should not be misled for a moment, or obliged to reconstruct his image or to hold in mind for any length of time masses of details whose relation to one another and to the whole cannot be discovered. Modifications in the image, if not too radical, can, of course, be made as the description proceeds. They should, however, not be of the nature of corrections of mistaken conceptions, but rather additions which shall fill in the general outlines with greater definiteness of detail. An imaginative impression is not made all at once, and indelibly. If it were, Homer’s “round wheels, seven-spoked” might prove not a bit happier than round, seven-spoked wheels; for one might have pictured to himself

instantly a round wheel, eight-spoked, and had to correct the image. The chances are, though, that he would first have got an impression of spokes without number; so that Homer stands acquitted. But is there much force in the cautions given by some rhetoricians about the dangers in mentioning a number of descriptive traits in advance of the object to which they are to be referred? It is safe to say that everybody can, when necessary, hold as many as three or four epithets in mind until the noun is reached; and a writer is seldom tempted to do anything worse than that in the heaping on of epithets. There seems to be no use in arguing that it *should* be difficult to relate a few epithets coming before the object. The question is, Do we really find it so? The fact that writers in English still persist in placing most of their adjectives before their nouns would seem to indicate that the readers are not greatly troubled by the practice.

There is one principle of ordering that is essentially adapted to the reader's ease; that is, the movement from a general impression to the particulars which go to make it up. If one were to push the inquiry back far enough, he would find this to be in many cases the reverse of the actual order of perception. Its great naturalness is due to the fact that, although we may apprehend the parts first, in observing any object, our impression of the whole is formed so very rapidly that we seem to have got it first. The rhetorical effectiveness of giving at least a suggestion of the general impression first can hardly be questioned. It serves as a unifying principle, and makes the description clear. No amount of detail can be confusing if it is well arranged and properly prepared for. The general impression, when placed at the beginning, is usually not very definitely formulated. Some indefiniteness is usually desirable for the sake of leaving the imagination free to work in future details.

After the order is determined on, the matter of transition from part to part requires some consideration. Skill in transition is here, more than in any other kind of writing, the "art which conceals art." Often outright transition is unnecessary. Such a transition as follows is an unnecessary and unsightly blotch: "It would not be a bad plan to observe now the manner of the Colonel's taking snuff." The author should not make the effort at arrangement unduly conspicuous by calling attention to his transitions. Complex descriptions cannot move without some sort of machinery, but there is no reason why the machinery should distract attention by its bump and rattle. The inconspicuous transition is desirable for its ease and grace. Often the order can be hinted or expressed in a word or a phrase without any elaborate explanation. The understanding may require formal notification of a shift of ground in reasoning; but the imagination is quick to take a hint.

Almost all that has been said of the conserving of unity applies also in some measure to the conserving of emphasis. The chief consideration is, to keep the main impression dominant, not smothering it with details. An apparent exception to the rules for securing unity and emphasis is this: description, more than other kinds of writing, and even more than painting, makes occasional use of details not especially important for the whole composition, but interesting in themselves because curious, novel, locally peculiar. Often such details, being picturesque in themselves, give the imagination something tangible to work upon and contribute to the effect of realism. Where they are so far off from the tone of the whole as to furnish a distraction rather than variety or relief, the author must choose between a desire to give fresh and interesting detail and a desire to convey an artistic impression of the whole.

Emphasis is, in the first place, a matter of proportion. If a single detail occupies as much space as ten others, the reader will inevitably attach more consequence to the one so much insisted on. For example, the emphasis in James Lane Allen's "Two Gentlemen of Kentucky" upon the embroidered texts from scripture, is secured not alone by the novelty of the fact, but also by the author's elaboration of it.

~~Emphasis is secured also by position.~~ Here the most important mechanical consideration is the placing of the fundamental image or general impression. It may reasonably be placed either first or last, the former method having always the advantage of greater clearness. As clearness of imaging is so essential, one is often willing to sacrifice the effect of climax in description and to place at the beginning his summarizing principle, which in most kinds of writing comes normally at the close. For conclusion, one may then reserve a single important detail; or, he may repeat, suggest, or reënforce the general impression if he feels that it is desirable.

In the following description of a face,¹ the mouth receives strong emphasis by proportion, by position, and by special comment as well:

"How very lovable her face was to him! There was nothing ethereal about it; all was real vitality, real warmth, real incarnation. Yet when all was thought and felt that could be thought and felt about her features in general, it was her mouth which turned out to be the magnetic pole thereof. Eyes almost as deep and speaking he had seen before, and cheeks perhaps as fair; brows as arched, a chin and throat almost as shapely; her mouth he had seen nothing at all to equal on the face of the earth. To a young man with the least fire in him, that

¹ Hardy. Tess of the D'Urbervilles, ch. 24. Harper & Brothers.

little upward lift in the middle of her top lip was distracting, infatuating, maddening. He had never before seen a woman's lips and teeth which forced upon his mind, with such persistent iteration, the old Elizabethan simile of roses filled with snow."

Proportion, position, and deliberate comment on significance are the author's first means of emphasizing the important detail. Where these prove insufficient, the author must resort to vivid diction.

VII. THE DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH

INASMUCH as description is the most purely imaginative and least logical of all forms of discourse, the principles of paragraph division are difficult of application and still more difficult to formulate in rules that shall seem reasonable. About all that one can say absolutely is, that every descriptive paragraph that is good has ~~unity of imaginative impression~~. It seems to have been either a total experience or a single total aspect of a prolonged experience of the writer. Length and complexity furnish no criterion; for, so long as the details contribute to one impression of the object and seem to form a part of one continuous experience, they may be accumulated—providing always that the description is not so long as to defeat the reader in his efforts at reconstructing the impression as a whole. For unity of impression, a single sustained paragraph is, of course, usually much more effective than a number of short ones. As good descriptions of single objects are usually rather short, it is safe to say that the writer will find it best not to break them into paragraphs unless he sees a definite reason for doing so.

Miss Buck and Mrs. Morris propose ¹ as the one right

¹ Expository Writing, pages 25-29.

guide in descriptive paragraphing the actual stages of our sense-perception of the object. Undoubtedly this is a useful suggestion, especially when one is writing from a fresh experience, somewhat prolonged, and containing pauses so distinct as to be recognizable by an author who has sufficient imagination to write description but may not be enough of a psychologist to analyze minutely the continuity of his perceptive processes. It is easy to see the excellence of such a plan when applied to a traveller's description of a strip of scenery. The framework would naturally be narrative, and every distinct change in the point of view as one approached or receded, or every distinct change in the physical aspect of the landscape as it appealed to the eye of the traveller might be said to indicate the need of a new paragraph. But, inasmuch as many writers prefer, for very good reasons, to use material not deliberately gathered afresh but stored up in memory, or even to combine elements of past experience into new creations, it is evident at once that the stages of the writer's actual sense-perception cannot be regarded as the only clue to paragraph division. Such a principle would presuppose a special ordering of details as the only correct grouping; but it is not always desirable to follow the exact order of experience, because it may be purely accidental, or abnormal to the point of eccentricity. Even if it should prove a normal order, it is still questionable whether the use of it would guarantee successful description. It would be pleasant to believe that the natural unity and coherence of the sense-experience will inevitably transfer themselves to a composition if the writer only takes care to copy the order of his perceptions; but my own conclusions, based on the productions of a large number of willing experimenters, is that they usually do not. If one is to hope for good paragraphing in description, he must recognize the fact that, while the point of separation

may be marked by something in the object itself, something in the physical conditions under which it is observed, something in the psychological process of perception, or by a change in the mental point of view, paragraphing is an artificial principle, a literary device which should be consciously applied by the writer in accordance with the artistic purpose of his composition. While in some cases it may seem to depend on the experience itself, as where one follows the natural division in time or space, or changes in the physical point of view, there are other cases where it is determined by considerations of quite another sort. A study of the specimens in this text alone will be sufficient to convince one that even in description, the least logical kind of writing, the logical paragraph frequently occurs. Whenever paragraphing is used simply because a subject is too long or too complex in the matter of detail to present effectively in one paragraph, the subject may be divided according to the aspects in which it is viewed mentally. If one were describing a room so elaborately that paragraphing was required, it would not be reasonable to attempt to do without any logical division of the matter into parts. Whether there should be any paragraphing at all is often determined on purely logical considerations: that is to say, it is a question of proportion. Whenever a detail has sufficiently asserted itself to the describer's interest to make him desire to elaborate it for the sake of securing a greater emphasis than it would naturally claim—that is to say, whenever the writer disturbs the natural proportions considerably to dwell on details of peculiar interest, he has a logical reason and artistic use for paragraphing. A study of Irving's "Westminster Abbey" will show a number of such instances. Here what was possibly the natural order of experience is followed in a few cases, but the paragraphing is pre-

dominantly based on ~~logical choice~~ of ~~new topics~~ for comment or upon ~~change of mood~~. The following selections will furnish interesting study in respect to paragraph division: Hardy's description of Eustacia Vye, and that of the heath; Ruskin's "The Old Tower of Calais Church;" Hawthorne's "The Marble Faun;" and Allen's "A Gentleman of Kentucky."

VIII. THE DESCRIPTIVE SENTENCE

THE logical structure of the descriptive sentence calls for no special comment, unless it may be this: the constant demand for grace, variety, and naturalness and the necessity for gathering together numbers of details have combined to bring about a prevalence of long, loose sentences rather than short and periodic. The long descriptive sentences of James Lane Allen illustrate a certain grammatical freedom that is common in the best description; those of Ruskin are still looser; while those of Dickens are often altogether lawless. Whatever departure there may be in descriptive writing from the conventions of the strongly unified logical sentence seem to be due chiefly to the desire to accumulate details within a single sentence for the purpose of producing a unified imaginative impression and, secondarily, for rhetorical effects. Now a firm grammatical structure is, of course, not incompatible with ease and grace, but it is sometimes sacrificed to them; and it is a question whether the looseness which occasionally accompanies ease and naturalness of expression is any more offensive to the average reader of description than the monotonous accuracy of the amateur who hangs tight to his grammar but pays no attention to the rhetorical effects that may be got through artistic grouping of details and flexibility

of sentence form. The following sketches of persons will illustrate the impossibility of making description readable without some attention to variety of sentence length and structure.

"As he addressed another part of the audience, his back was turned towards us. He was tall and straight. His shoulders were broad and square. His head was massive, and was covered with iron-gray hair. All became silent as he turned around."

"He has a round face and deep-set, dark brown eyes. His forehead is broad and firmly outlined. He has a fair complexion with rosy cheeks, which indicate good health. His nose is short and thick. His ears are well-proportioned to his face and lie close to his head. His athletic body is well-developed."

The row of short simple sentences all built on the same plan is appropriate only to a primer. Such writing is entirely without art, and can hardly be called composition, because it does little more than furnish a list of items as in an inventory. It shows no individuality, no style.

After clearness, euphony is the chief consideration in descriptive writing. This is in part a matter of the single words, but is still more dependent upon the effect of words in combination. Stevenson says:¹

"Each phrase in literature is built of sounds, as each phrase in music consists of notes. One sound suggests, echoes, demands, and harmonizes with another; and the art of rightly using these concordances is the final art in literature."

The harmonious combination of sounds is striven for by every writer who is working toward a style, or indi-

¹ On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature, *Contemporary Review*, 47 : 5487.

vidual manner of expression. This does not mean mere prettiness of sound effects; for the harsh, strong, rugged tones of speech have their artistic qualities. It means rather the pleasing combination of sounds with one another. It means even more than this; for the style that is best for description will reflect in some measure the tone of the subject-matter. A study of Pater's "Mona Lisa" and Ruskin's "St. Mark's" will show this fine artistic adaptation of form to thought.

The quality of the object described and the effect intended by the writer will influence to some extent the sentence flow, and perhaps even the movement of the paragraph. The sentences in the selection from Ruskin entitled "Skies of a Day" are remarkable for their flexibility. And this huge sentence from "The Mountain Gloom," irritating as it might prove to one who has a passion for "diagramming," is delightful in its adaptation to the movement of the thought.

"The irregular meadows run in and out like inlets of lake among these harvested rocks, sweet with perpetual streamlets, that seem always to have chosen the steepest places to come down, for the sake of the leaps, scattering their handfuls of crystal this way and that, as the wind takes them, with all the grace, but with none of the formalism, of fountains; dividing into fanciful change of dash and spring, yet with the seal of their granite channels upon them, as the lightest play of human speech may bear the seal of past toil, and closing back out of their spray to lave the rigid angles, and brighten with silver fringes and glassy films each lower and lower step of sable stone; until at last, gathered all together again,—except, perhaps, some chance drops caught on the apple-blossom, where it has budded a little nearer the cascade than it did last spring,—they find their way down to the turf

and lose themselves in that silently; with quiet depth of clear water furrowing among the grass blades, and looking only like their shadow, but presently emerging again in little startled gushes and laughing hurries, as if they had remembered suddenly that the day was too short for them to get down the hill."

The adaptation of sentence flow to subject-matter and intended effect is largely dependent upon rhythm. All writing, even prose, that has literary style, has a recognizable rhythm or cadence—not a metre nor anything approaching a metre, but a varied rise and fall, a modulated flow of sound. Many writers of melodious prose, such as Jeremy Taylor, DeQuincey, Newman, Arnold, Ruskin, and Pater seem to be so sensitive to rhythmical effects that, quite unconsciously, they adapt the sweep of the sentence to the movement of the thought. The rhythmical effects of Stevenson, Poe, and Swinburne are still more striking, but apparently more studied. The reading aloud of the best prose of such men will help to train the ear to know the music of good prose style.

One of the first prescriptions of euphonious writing is the rounding out of the important sentence to a full close, refusing to let it drop suddenly, trail off, or altogether die away. A sentence from Ruskin's description of Turner's "Slave Ship" will show what is meant by the full-sounding close:

"Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labors amidst the lightning of the seas, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and, cast far along the

desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea."

The satisfying effect of this ending seems to be due not to the somewhat metrical effect of the last fourteen words but rather to a larger rhythmical movement of the whole passage and to a fulness of sound in the close. It is true that Ruskin, like other writers of musical prose, sometimes falls into the uniform metrical cadence of versé, but it should be noted that such measured phrases occur very rarely and only in his most exalted flights of fancy, and that there may always be felt through them the larger rhythmic movement of the whole passage much more conspicuously than it ever appears in verse. How unwise it is to confuse the rhythm of prose with the metre of poetry may be seen from a consideration of the following passages, the first of which describes a landscape; the second, the song of a bird. The freshman who wrote them protested that they were in his ordinary prose style, but a single reading aloud will suffice to show them to be, with the exception of the first clause, regularly metrical almost throughout—more regularly metrical, indeed, than the best verse usually is.

"The river surface lay still: its placid depths betrayed no stir, but caught the quiet of the hour. Before its grassy stretch were elfin trees with magic leaves; and, farther down, a goblin sun, half-hidden in a labyrinth of fairy clouds. Its surface was a mighty mirror; its farther brink, a borderland between two worlds—above, a world material, a spirit world below, but each the other's counterpart."

"He sang of God and heaven, and all the stars. The universe entire, of happiness and joy, came tripping on his merry notes."

Prettiness of effect is too dearly paid for if it means a breaking down of all distinctions between prose and verse. Many of Dickens's "finest" passages are marred for the average reader because they have the singsong cadence of verse instead of the larger, freer, and more varied rhythmical effect of melodious prose.

Even the effort to round out the larger cadences may be carried too far. Whenever the writer allows the reader to become separately conscious of the means that he employs as special devices, he is in danger of offending the æsthetic tastes by his striving after musical effects. For good prose is, above all, natural expression—natural to the writer and appropriate to his subject. And prose passages of unusually melodious effects,—such, for example, as the beautiful simile of Jeremy Taylor,¹ beginning, "But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood"—must find their reason for existence either in some special fitness to the subject or in some special inspiration of the writer. If a sentence is rounded out to please the ear, it must be no less pleasing to the mind. Not melody, but harmony, is the final word in the adaptation of sentence form to thought.

IX. DESCRIPTIVE DICTION

MORE than any other kind of composition, description requires exquisite care in the choice of words. One must not only understand the exact shade of meaning a word may be counted on to convey to the reader's mind: one must also be keenly aware of the value of the word in the matter of suggestion—must know whether it merely names a trait, or makes a picture, or rouses an emotion. One word may mean no more than another, strictly

¹ The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying, ch. 1, sec. 2.

speaking, and still be infinitely preferable because of what it hints. The descriptive artist needs, first of all, for accuracy of expression, a wide vocabulary to choose from, and secondly, for vividness and richness, a trained sensitiveness to the overtones of human speech.

Accuracy requires the patient hunt for the one right word. A story writer who wished to picture vividly a crucial situation, where a man, with his feet pinned between two trees felled by an avalanche of snow, gazed up into the face of his mortal foe from whom he hoped, but did not dare expect, deliverance, said of him that he had in his eyes the look of a "paw-fast grizzly."¹ The author once lamented that it took thirty-five minutes to produce the word *paw-fast*; but what is such an expenditure of time compared with the satisfaction of getting now and then the word that fits? In abstract thought the search is not so difficult, nor are the results so uncertain; but descriptive material is in the main concrete; and the descriptive vocabulary which succeeds in making the reader see and feel with the author abounds in terms suggesting physical sensation. A study of the works of Kipling and Stevenson will be sufficient to convince one of the value of concrete diction.

Descriptive diction that is effective is economical. The rapidity with which the imagination normally constructs its pictures is the one good reason for refusing to muffle the subject in voluminous expression. In exposition or in argument a failure to give complete expression at once to the idea can occasionally be remedied by repeated approaches from a different direction; but inability to convey an impression by description with one fair trial almost inevitably spells failure. One sure stroke is worth more than twenty excellent approaches; and if

¹ Chauncey Thomas. Why the Hot Sulphur Mail Was Late, *McClure's*, Nov. 1901.

that one sure stroke can be achieved, it should not cause a writer pain to throw away the twenty by-products of his labor.

The happy epithet is the most striking characteristic of fresh, original description. It gives emphasis in two ways: first, it involves, as a rule, the omission of many insignificant features, and the choice of salient details; and, secondly, it emphasizes those retained by naming them suggestively. Carlyle's epithets are peculiarly vivid. He says Webster has a "mastiff-mouth, accurately closed" and an "amorphous, crag-like face;" that Wordsworth is a "garrulous, rather watery, not wearisome old man." James Lane Allen gives a quick picture of a parson's "white, wind-splitting face." The epithets John Burroughs uses to distinguish the qualities of bird-notes in "A Chorus of Birds" are deserving of study. There are, among others, the "liquid, silvery, bubbling notes" of the wren, the "round, richly modulated whistle" of the finch, the "golden" voice of the wood-thrush, "serene, liquid, transparent." Burroughs excels in concrete description of physical sensations, succeeding even in the difficult sensation of taste, as where he speaks of the "wild delicacy and fillip" of the strawberry, "its keen feathered edge, its barbed sweetness." The vividness of the following short descriptions is clearly traceable to their economy and to the use of suggestive epithets.

"A lop-sided waning moon, not long risen, looked over the ragged crest of the ridge and sent long shadows down the wooded slope."

"His reading, it might have been added, had much hurt the effect of the piece: a dreary pulpit or even conventicle manner; that flattest moaning ho-hoo of pre-determined pathos, with a kind of rocking canter introduced by way of intonation, each stanza the exact fellow

of the other, and the dull swing of the rocking-horse duly in each; no reading could be more unfavorable to Sterling's poetry than his own."—CARLYLE, "Life of Sterling."

"And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, both hands to your partner, bow and curtsy, corkscrew, thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig 'cut'—cut so deftly that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger."—DICKENS.

The value of epithet description lies in its concentration. Carried too far, it is, like extreme impressionism of any sort, likely to degenerate into caricature. Epithets should be fresh and few. A series of adjectives such as Kipling applies to Hurree Babu—"full-fleshed, heavy-haunched, bull-necked, and deep-voiced"—is not objectionable, standing alone; but the frequent recurrence of such series would become monotonous. In using a series of epithets one runs the risk of sacrificing at the same time the grace of fuller description and the economy of the single epithet.

Valuable as is the adjective epithet, it is easily overworked. The amateur is constantly tempted to make the adjectives carry practically the whole burden of description. Imagine, for example, the heap of epithets a clever beginner would be ready to bestow on Kaa, the rock python, of whom Kipling makes a "snap-shot" in the height of action, perpetuating every movement by the choice of a lively verb, without the use of one waste adjective:¹

"They found him stretched out on a warm ledge in

¹ The Jungle Book, p. 48. Copyright, by Rudyard Kipling. Used by permission.

the afternoon sun, admiring his beautiful new coat, for he had been in retirement for the last ten days changing his skin, and now he was very splendid—darting his big blunt-nosed head along the ground, and twisting the thirty feet of his body into fantastic knots and curves, and licking his lips as he thought of his dinner to come. . . . Kaa seemed to pour himself along the ground, finding the shortest road with his steady eyes, and keeping to it. . . .

“He turned twice or thrice in a big circle, weaving his head from right to left. Then he began making loops and figures of eight with his body, and soft, oozy triangles that melted into squares and five-sided figures, and coiled mounds, never resting, never hurrying, and never stopping his low, humming song. It grew darker and darker, till at last the dragging, shifting coils disappeared, but they could hear the rustle of the scales.”

It would be worth a student's while to examine passages from Kipling, Stevenson, and Lafcadio Hearn and note the great effectiveness of their descriptive verbs and adverbs. Kipling's verbs throughout the “Jungle Books” present quickly and vividly all the varied jungle life. The buffaloes “lumber up” out of the sticky mud, the kite “balances” and “wheels” and “rocks” on its wings, the “big swallowing muscles on either side of Kaa's throat ripple and bulge,” the panther “lounges” through the jungle. Burroughs says of a black-snake that it “came streaming down from the nest to a lower limb, sliding stealthily.” The peculiar vividness of the verb in description is due to the fact that it is not only picture-making, but quickest of all the parts of speech in its rousing of the reader's sense of life, activity, and movement. The stylistic value of the suggestion of activity is attested by the practice of many writers in making use

of trope words involving action and even personality in the description of resting or lifeless objects.

"The Moon of New Talk, who splashed her light full on rock and pool, slipped it between trunk and creeper, and sifted it through a million leaves."¹

The adverb shares with the verb the ability to suggest activity. The noun also will be found to have its pictorial suggestions, as in the description of the python just quoted or in this account of jungle sounds and movements:

"Every rustle in the grass, every breath of the warm night air, every scratch of a bat's claws as it roosted for a while on a tree, and every splash of every little fish."

A large part of the wearisomeness of amateur descriptive style can be traced to inability to realize that the adjective is not the only part of speech that has descriptive force.

We have been considering so far the choice of words for exactness and for vivid and economical pictorial portrayal. But the artist in description aims to share a whole experience—not simply to create a picture; and therefore his vocabulary needs to be richly suggestive of impressions, as well as picture-making.

Figurative language is common in description because of its image-making power and because of its interpretative character, its suggestion of impressions. Burroughs uses figures effectively for both purposes. His scarlet tanager "glows like a live coal;" the columbine is a "jet of foliage and color shooting out of a black line . . . , rising up like a tiny fountain." Peculiarly effective is a figure of speech applied to the quality of the note of a song sparrow, which he says is "like a long arc or parabola of

¹ Kipling. The Second Jungle Book: The Spring Running.

sound," referring to it again as a "silver loop of sound." The figures he applies to the motion of the red fox convey both an image of the motion and an impression. The motion of the fox is to the eye, he says, "what a flowing measure is to the mind." "The fox drifts along like a large red thistledown—or like a plume borne by the wind." It is a visual impression that is flashed upon the reader's imagination by James Lane Allen's description of the Kentucky cardinal: "The stone had hardly struck the brush when what looked like a tongue of vermillion flame leaped forth near by, and, darting across, stuck itself out of sight in the green vines on the opposite slope." Hardy makes a similar use of the figure when he refers to men "whose lips met like the halves of a muffin." Both sound and motion are quickly and forcibly suggested in Kipling's figure: "The great, dripping bull broke out of his wallow like a shell exploding." The following comparison, by Dickens, does not add clearness, but records a subjective impression of a humorous resemblance: "There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spanish friars."

The set figure is useful in description for clear understanding, clear imaging, or association of the object with similar ones. The ingrained metaphors of descriptive diction are still more valuable because they are less conspicuous and get their effects more subtly. Where a set simile would appear labored, a happy metaphor often appeals to the reader as natural and spontaneous. This is perhaps due to the very commonness of metaphor in all our speech. If we use the English language with any degree of power, we employ trope words very freely. A study of the history of many of our words which are felt to be rich in associative meaning will show them to have been charged with imagery. Language is *fossil-poetry*,

says Trench. Perhaps because the ingrained metaphor is recognized as an integral part of our speech it is often accepted without any attempt at mental analysis of the exact figure involved, but simply with a feeling of its rich suggestiveness. Especially frequent in description are trope words which attribute action to inert objects and those which tend to personify natural objects and natural forces. We often criticise the latter tendency as primitive; yet this youthful tendency of human imagination has left a lasting imprint on our language.

Descriptive style may be enriched also by the suggestion of associated ideas and experiences; that is, by simply setting in motion a train of recollections by some hint which may be counted on as likely to have a universal appeal, as in the following:

"There were piles of filberts, mossy and brown, recalling, in their fragrance, ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings ankle deep through withered leaves."

Pictorially, this is not remarkable, but it does make the reader share the experience of the author. This associative power of language may be observed in a poem¹ by Zoe Akins, describing Julia Marlowe's voice, where the author, after five pretty but not especially powerful similes, caps the whole series with one perfect hint:

"And memorable as things that make us weep,"

a line comparatively vague so far as conveying any information is concerned, but powerful through its suggestion. The indirect description, by effect,

"A deep hush and a silence fall around
Its golden tone,"

is more convincing than a series of epithets could be,

¹ The Perfect Voice. *The Century*, October, 1910.

simply because it recalls associated experiences. If we have not heard Julia Marlowe, we have at least been profoundly moved by the sweetness and the power of some human voice; and, as we strive to imagine the qualities of the voice described, recollections of previous experiences come to our aid.

Besides the more or less definite association of ideas by figures which compare or identify with other objects or which enliven by endowing with human attributes, and the somewhat less definite hinting of associated experiences which the reader may have had in common with the writer, there is to be reckoned with the fact that words have, alone or in combination, a certain power of vague suggestiveness which defies analysis but can still be keenly felt. Kipling seems to have a peculiar knack at this sort of vague suggestion, as where he speaks of "wet, star-lighted, blossoming places," or where he says that Mowgli "would follow a tree-road till his mood changed, and he *shot downward in a long, leafy curve*," or in this effective silhouette: "The moon was sinking behind the hills, and the lines of trembling monkeys huddled together on the walls and battlements looked like *ragged, shaky fringes of things*." In Allen's description of the trees in a Kentucky forest, the epithets not only picture, but accurately and delicately convey the spirit of the place, so that the reader feels himself among those trees and impressed as Allen was:

"Oaks and walnuts, maples and elms, centuries old, gnarled, massive, drooping, majestic, through whose arches the sun hurled down only some solitary spear of gold, and over whose gray-mossed roots some cold brook crept in silence."

Sometimes the emotional associations of words are dependent not so much on their meanings as upon their

sounds. The feeling suggested by the sound of a word is sometimes very closely bound up with its actual meaning, and that in turn with the sound. The rhetoricians have given a formidable name, *onomatopœia*, to the intentional use of words whose sound suggests the sense. But much of the mimicking is done unconsciously. Our vocabularies of sound and motion are very largely imitative: *buzz*, *whirr*, *swirl*, *swish*, *rattle*, *clang*, *roar*, *boom*, *clatter*, *pop*, and words of their sort are unmistakable in meaning because they carry the sense impression along with them. Kipling in the *Jungle Books* uses imitative words very freely. "Kal Nag *swashed* out of the water." "He threw himself squarely on his haunches, and, spreading out his fore-paws, hugged as many as he could hold, and then began to hit with a regular *bat-bat-bat* like the flipping strokes of a paddle-wheel." These are evidently instances of deliberate imitation. Sometimes it merely happens that the sound of the word is apt in its transmission of the sense. That the sounds of words in combination may have very striking fitness to the sense is a fact recognized by all great poets. Tennyson's use of "tone-color" is so familiar that a single passage will serve to characterize it:

"So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea."

In the following passage the effect of retarded motion is due not merely to the verse movement, but quite as much to some subtle effect of the long vowels and the initial consonants of the words which serve as checks to the movement of the verse:

"So strode he back slow to the wounded king."

The imitative use of words is not confined to sounds and motions. An outline may be very vividly pictured by the aid of sound-suggestion, as in the expression, "the *sudden jab* of a black pinnacle through the mist." The subtle

imitative effect of certain vowels and consonants in combination may be observed to some extent in the whole of Shelley's description of a ravine,¹ but most conspicuously in the first nine lines:

"Gray rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemm'd
The struggling brook; tall spires of windlestræ
Threw their dim shadows down the wooded slope,
And naught but knarlèd roots of ancient pines,
Branchless and blasted, clench'd with grasping roots
Th' unwilling soil.

Lo! Where the pass extends
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems with its accumulated crags
To overhang the world; for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars, and descending moon,
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden colored even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene
In naked and severe simplicity
Made contrast with the universe. A pine
Rock-rooted, stretch'd athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response at each pause,
In most familiar cadence, with the howl,
The thunder, and the hiss of homeless streams,
Mingling its solemn song."

The impressionistic effect cannot of course be attributed solely to onomatopœia, for a careful choice of epithet, skilful metrical effects, and alliteration play their part; but to anyone with a sensitive ear the ruggedness of outline is very vividly suggested by the sounds of the harsh consonant and vowel combinations.

One may often discover alliteration in a fine prose passage, as in Ruskin's description of the pines: "fallen flakes and fragments of the night, stayed in their solemn

¹ Alastor. By permission of The Macmillan Company.

squares in the midst of all the rosy bendings of the orchard boughs, and yellow effulgence of the harvest, and tracing themselves in a black network and motionless fringes against the blanched blue of the horizon in its saintly clearness." But unless the temper of the passage is decidedly poetic, such obvious alliteration may become unpleasant, because the recurrence of regular sound devices such as are used in poetry seems too studied for the effect of naturalness in prose. If not too long sustained, alliteration, combined with other sound suggestions, such as that of rhythm, may contribute much to the force of a passage, as in Poe's description of the whirlpool, by effect: "speeding dizzily round with a swaying and sweltering motion."

The euphony of words in themselves and their harmonious combination as it affects the ear are considerations which appeal to every master in description, but they are not matters on which any extensive theorizing is of profit. Susceptibility to the impressions made by the sounds of words is a matter of individual training, to which end the most helpful exercise is simply the reading aloud of good prose and verse. Undoubtedly the standards of people in the matter of euphony are highly individual. The bald repetition of the same word in two senses, "the rock rocked," evidently did not offend the delicately sensitive ear of Poe.

The clearness and force of a descriptive passage, in so far as they inhere in the style and not the arrangement, have been seen to depend very largely upon these qualities of diction: accuracy in the naming of traits; economy and vividness of epithets; the occasional choice of figurative words or expressions conveying a clear image of the whole; the use of words rich in connotation, suggesting similar objects or experiences, or calling up related ideas, or accurately interpreting the subjective impressions of

the author; and, finally, the skilful use of sound suggestions, ranging from downright imitative effects to the subtler considerations of euphony and harmony. The highest and finest appropriateness of diction makes a requirement which cannot be fulfilled deliberately but is seen in the unconscious adaptation, by practised writers, of the tone of the vocabulary as a whole to the nature of the subject and the spirit of the selection. That this adaptation of style to thought concerns the arrangement, as well as the choice of words, has been seen in the consideration of prose rhythm.

The striving after fine or forcible effects by deliberate attention to the diction presents many a pitfall to the amateur. A consideration of sound alone may lead him to write words regardless of their sense. "The river rushes madly down the hill with its listless murmur." "As his life's sun neared its setting, it cast a halo of perfumed light from a life well spent." A false attempt at elaboration seems to be responsible for the mistaken and grotesque impressions conveyed by the following passages:

"The glittering stars displayed their numerous colors."

"The sun, a flaming ball of fire, seemed to smile a fond good-night."

"He has an amiable eye which is frequently caught looking far off into the utmost corners of an idea. He has an eye, too, which can look you frankly in the face."

It is in the attempt to use figurative language that the grossest blunders in the matters of accuracy, force, and fineness of expression are committed. It is true that figurative language is used freely by the best descriptive writers, but the amateur indulges still more freely, sometimes with a distressing disregard for all considerations of honesty of feeling, sincerity of expression, and good taste in suggestion. A study of the following extracts

will show an unwise exaltation of the figurative above the more honest and appropriate literal expression.

"From the time he had been a humble tiller of Old Mother Earth till now."

"One can see small shoots of green corn pushing their way through Mother Earth."

"The loving girl then coiled her arm about his neck."

"The whole orchard which surrounded the lawn appeared to be carpeted by a spotted cloak that remained perfectly inert."

"And the thunder, like some angry animal, rolled from east to west."

"Suddenly we heard the waters of the great Niagara rumbling as if they were being poured from a pitcher."

"The river, winding through the hills like a silver ribbon, stretched until it faded in the purplish distance."

"The mounds of the low graves were covered, as it were, with a thick, warm blanket, and the tombstones were wrapped as if in soft fur."

The same effort at something finer than can be made of honest individual forms of speech has led to the adoption of certain cant words and phrases, some of which were once beautiful or forceful, but have now become worn and tawdry through much use. Examples of these are *the vaulted heavens*, *crystal brook*, *silver thread*, *trees robed in the garment of autumn*. In the passages which follow, the expression is pretty enough, in a common sort of way, but offers nothing individual to set the imagination going and so create a picture:

"Myriads of twinkling stars in the cloudless sky lend their light to the beautiful scene."

"Between me and the street stretches a valley broad and deep, with a few small cottages nestling among its

trees and shrubs. Through the midst of the valley a babbling brook flows rippling along over the pebbles, and in its clear surface, the stepping-stones are mirrored."

There are certain words and phrases which seem to haunt the young describer. He loves them at first sight and would cling to them forever. "Old Sol" is a jocular familiarity which seems to delight freshman and senior alike. "Sentinels" appeal almost as strongly. One student was so obsessed with the "tall sentinel" idea that, in describing her room, she forced her dresser and her wardrobe to act as sentinels for the rest of the furniture. An English professor has published a volume of essays in which he bursts now and then into what his printer has chosen to regard as poetry. He says, in a little poem inspired by the sight of an ant on the wing of a butterfly,

"Thistledown filled the air,
Like sentinels placed here and there."

If he had reached into a bag of similes with his eyes shut, he could hardly have got anything more ludicrously false. There is such a thing as being too imaginative. *Nestle* is a good word, but obviously everything must not nestle. *Dots* are all right, too, if not too copiously bestowed. A remark to a class that about half their landscapes contained somewhere the expression, "dotted here and there" resulted in this pleasing revision by an enterprising member: "Below may be seen a farmhouse or two making small dots upon the green pasture." The same clinging fondness for conventionalism in diction was evidenced by another student, who, on being criticised for his extravagant taste in the matter of diamonds as ornamental similes in his landscapes, brought in this amendment to a theme: "The dew on the grass sparkled like bits of glass cut to represent diamonds."

After inaccuracy and insincerity, feebleness is perhaps the most difficult fault to overcome. Sometimes it is caused by a muffling in voluminous expression. "Near him sat a small baby who was engaged in that unpleasant occupation of crying." Sometimes it is due to a choice of conventional attitudes as well as conventional phrasings, as in the beginning, "I think an orchard is a very pretty sight," or the ending, "Altogether, it is a very beautiful scene," or the remark, "On every side of me were signs of Nature." Conventionalism of diction means the general and not the specific suggestion of the qualities of the thing described. There are some words so general in their import that they are mere counters for thought, when occurring in a descriptive passage. "To the right was a town which *added* greatly to the view." "Hundreds of little birds *added* to the scene." Description is not an exercise in simple addition. The impressions must be specifically named, and also interwoven.

The safest models in descriptive diction for a beginner are those writers who use language with simplicity and yet with vigor, rather than those who occasionally overreach for fine effects either of imaginative beauty or of intellectual implication. Ruskin and Hardy write admirable description; but the average person will perhaps learn more from a careful study of the styles of Stevenson and Kipling, who are in reality as artful but still have the effect of greater simplicity of diction. Ruskin is not entirely guiltless of passages just a little bit too fine for prose. And Hardy's descriptions are sometimes overcharged with intellectual suggestion, so that, if the object is to get a picture or concrete impression, that object is sacrificed and one gets instead a thought. This is not so much due to a preference for rather unusual words, which make one think out the meaning before he can get

an image, ("etiolated arms of ivy," "the lonely antelucan hour," the roots of an oak "spreading out like accipitrine claws"), as it is due to a tendency on the part of the author to carry the reader away with him from the simple concrete matter being presented to some remote matter of which it has subtly reminded him, as in the passages which follow:

"Supper-time came, and with it the hot-baked from the oven, laid on a snowy cloth fresh from the press, and reticulated with folds as in Flemish 'Last Suppers'."

"Then could be beheld that change from the handsome to the curious which the features of a wood undergo at the ingress of the winter months. Angles were taking the place of curves, and reticulations of surfaces—a change constituting a sudden lapse from the ornate to the primitive on Nature's canvas, and comparable to a retrogressive step from the art of an advanced school of painting to that of the Pacific Islander."

Here the thought is good, but by the end of the passage one has ceased to regard the image. These extracts are not intended to show that Hardy is not a master of concrete description also, but are used only to illustrate his occasional practice of letting an image trail off into thought. The beginner will find it easier to master concrete description first.

X. DESCRIPTION IN ITS RELATIONS TO NARRATION

1. LANDSCAPE

THE art of landscape description may fairly be called modern. The classical poetry which survives reveals a singular blindness to total landscape effects. One must

not, of course, ignore the splendid flashes of description in Homer and Vergil; but one is forced to recognize the fact that, suggestive as they are through happy diction, they still indicate a very limited range of interest in the details of natural scenery and an almost total indifference to the reproduction of a scene as a whole. The great epic poets of Greece and Rome give us, scattered through their narrative, an occasional vivid bit of out-of-doors, the qualities of the objects being packed, as was usual in early descriptive art, into a few concentrated epithets. There are swift glimpses of the sea, of flying cloud and terrifying storm,—alive with the ancient's dread and admiration for a power greater than himself. But for the most part the intention in the landscape description of the early poets is, to please; and the pleasing landscape is almost invariably that which turns a smiling face toward man, offering to his view smoothly flowing streams, cool, shady groves, refreshing fountains, comfortable pastures, rich meadow-land. It is a pleasing type of beauty—this land of corn and wine—but too smooth and regular and normal to be perennially satisfying to man's imagination.

One who makes a study of the subject will find that it is possible to trace somewhat distinct stages in the development of landscape description. In the Greek and Latin poets the interest seems to be limited for the most part to single aspects, which are most economically and imaginatively suggested. Mediæval writers will be found less limited to the material aspects of the scenery, and more inclined, also, to include some stronger, rougher aspects. And yet the mediæval landscape shows no considerable development of descriptive art because, while it is a fuller, more detailed portrayal than that of the ancients, it is at the same time very much stiffer. Landscape has been conventionalized and devoted to symbolic

purposes; and there is little effort to reproduce real scenes. It is interesting to place beside a mediæval landscape an elaborate scene from Scott, and note the difference between the idea and the picture of a landscape detailed with fidelity and care.

The mediæval use of landscape has not survived in modern poetry or prose; but we often meet in poetry a reminder of Homer's or Vergil's art, the imaginative and suggestive, rather than realistic and pictorial portrayal. Browning abounds in such quick glimpses, and even so profuse a describer as Scott occasionally spares detail and boldly suggests his scene.

“The blackening wave is edged with white.
To inch and rock the sea-mews fly.”

Among the prose writers of modern times, the tendency is toward greater fulness of detail. Sometimes there is the effort to create a definite picture, as in this scene from Fielding:

“It stood on the south-east side of a hill, but nearer the bottom than the top of it, so as to be sheltered from the north-east by a grove of old oaks which rose above it in a gradual ascent of near half a mile and yet high enough to enjoy a most charming prospect of the valley beneath.

“In the midst of the grove was a fine lawn sloping down towards the house, near the summit of which rose a beautiful spring gushing out of a rock covered with firs, and forming a constant cascade of about thirty feet, not carried down a regular flight of steps, but tumbling in a natural fall over the broken and mossy stones till it came to the bottom of the rock, then running off in a pebbly channel, that with many lesser falls winded along till it fell into a lake at the foot of the hill, about a quarter of

a mile below the house on the south side, and which was seen from every room in the front. Out of this lake, which filled the centre of a beautiful plain, embellished with groups of beeches and elms, and filled with sheep, issued a river that for several miles was seen to meander through an amazing variety of meadows and woods till it emptied itself into the sea, with a large arm of which, and an island beyond it, the prospect was closed.

"On the right side of this valley opened another of less extent, adorned with several villages, and terminated by one of the towers of an old ruined abbey, grown over with ivy, and a part of the front, which remains still entire.

"The left-hand scene presented the view of a very fine farm, composed of very unequal ground, and agreeably varied with all the diversity that hills, lawns, woods, and water, laid out with admirable taste, but owing less to art than to nature, could give. Beyond this, the country gradually rose into a ridge of wild mountains, the tops of which were above the clouds."

But landscape may also be presented without any such definite grouping of the parts. The author may aim, not to produce a clear image of a single landscape as it appears at one time from a given point of view, but to suggest a series of images which shall give an impression of the general character of the landscape. In the following passage from Ruskin, the author seems to be endeavoring to control the visualizing powers of the reader only in the matter of the general outlines, and to allow him the utmost freedom in blending with the general impression the wealth of suggestive detail afforded him.

"But above the brows of these scarped cliffs, all is in an instant changed. A few steps only beyond the first that stretch their branches, angular, and wild, and white,

like forks of lightning, into the air of the ravine, and we are in an arable country of the most perfect richness; the swathes of its corn glowing and burning from field to field; its pretty hamlets all vivid with fruitful orchards and flowery gardens, and goodly with steep-roofed storehouse and barn; its well-kept, park-like roads rising and falling from hillside to hillside, or disappearing among brown banks of moss, and thickets of wild raspberry and rose; or gleaming through lines of tall trees. . . . Along all the ridges stand the dark masses of innumerable pines, taking no part in its gladness, asserting themselves forever as fixed shadows, not to be pierced or banished, even in the intensest sunlight; fallen flakes and fragments of the night, stayed in their solemn squares in the midst of all the rosy bendings of the orchard boughs, and yellow effulgence of the harvest, and tracing themselves in black network and motionless fringes against the blanched blue of the horizon in its saintly clearness. And yet they do not sadden the landscape, but seem to have been set there chiefly to see how bright everything else is around them; and all the clouds look of purer silver, and all the air seems filled with a whiter and more living sunshine where they are pierced by the sable points of the pines; and all the pastures look of more glowing green, where they run up between the purple trunks, and the sweet field footpaths skirt the edges of the forest for the sake of its shade, sloping up and down about the slippery roots, and losing themselves every now and then hopelessly among the violets, and ground ivy, and brown sheddings of the fibrous leaves; and at last plunging into some open aisle where the light through the distant stems shows that there is a chance of coming out again at the other side, and coming out, indeed, in a little while, from the scented darkness, into the dazzling air and marvellous landscape, that stretches still farther and farther in new

wilfulness of grove and garden, until, at last, the craggy mountains of the Simmenthal rise out of it, sharp into the rolling of the Southern clouds."

It will be observed that in this last selection, and in Shelley's description of the mountain pass (p. 77), there is a sharp contrast between the attitude of the observers toward nature in her harsher aspects and the attitude of the classic poets. The lateness of development of a genuine interest in mountains and in all rugged outlines is to be observed in the history of painting as well as in the history of literature, indicating that it took many centuries for man's artistic sense to be educated into a delight in reproducing for æsthetic purposes what is not intrinsically pleasing to the senses. This feeling for the picturesque, as opposed to the merely pretty or comfortable aspects, and the intellectual appreciation of the character or spirit of a landscape are marks of a mature development.

It was but natural that, when the sense of the picturesque in landscape began to manifest itself in fiction, it should mean an effort at something like a full reproduction of a natural scene as a whole and in detail. The tendency to make elaborate set pictures reached its climax in the works of Sir Walter Scott, who unrolls a large canvas on which are portrayed what seem to be real persons and real scenes, life size, in all their natural colors, forms, and relations. The advance in landscape description since the time of Scott has been chiefly in technique. Later novelists have been more economical of detail, as a rule, combining in some measure the imaginative concentration of the ancients with greater richness of material.

There have been several causes at work in the production of the fuller landscape art in both poetry and fiction. It is not improbable that the growth of natural sciences,

giving, as it has done, a sharp stimulus to observation for its own sake and fostering a love of accuracy and detail, has done much to prepare the way for landscape description. A modern writer knows he can count on a lively and intelligent interest in the outdoor world on the part of every reader.

But a far more important reason for the increased interest in landscape description is the growth of narrative technique in general and the tendency toward realism in particular. The term *realism* is here used very broadly to mean the tendency toward faithful portrayal of a kind of life, so that it may be keenly realized and temporarily believed in by the reader. In this sense the most romantic tale, such as "The Ancient Mariner," may be said to be realistic in its manner of portrayal, because the scenes are so detailed and so vividly presented that they appeal to our very physical senses as if real. The novelist, even more than the narrative poet, has come to realize that he cannot set his people to working out their life-stories in a vacuum. In some of the early novels, if a character steps out of a house, he seems to be merely swallowed up in space. Realism demands definiteness of background, and usually this involves some scenery. For narrative is no longer a bald line of incident, nor even a mere play of characters in action: it is a group of interacting characters in a real situation. The setting of a story is not now to be regarded as either an accidental or a decorative feature; it is vital. For novelists have come to realize as a profound ethical and psychological truth that the environment has almost inevitably some sort of reaction upon the human mood, mind, or character. And thus has gradually evolved what is for the writer of prose description the highest art in landscape presentation—that which not merely reproduces a pleasing or interesting picture, either for the sake of its intrinsic merits or of skill in

artistic presentation, but also interprets the character of the scenery and shows how it is bound up with the life and interests of man. The volume of Hamlin Garland's short stories, "Main Traveled Roads," is an extremely interesting study in environments, in which mere landscape plays no small part. In most of George Eliot's novels, where landscape appears, it is thoughtfully interpreted, woven into the lives of characters. But perhaps the most striking and artistic use of natural scenery which combines the three possible interests, namely, that of the decorative or picturesque for its own sake, that of contributing to the verisimilitude of narrative by furnishing a real background for the action, and that of reacting upon the minds and hearts of the characters of the story, may be found in the novels of Thomas Hardy. Any one of them will illustrate the full portrayal of the community life as affecting character development; but for emphasis upon natural scenery as an element in the community life, "The Woodlanders," "The Return of the Native," and "Under the Greenwood Tree" will perhaps best repay careful study. It must be admitted that the average writer does not yet achieve in fiction this intimate union of scenery with the life of man, and that for him the demands of realism and local color mean landscape only in a very small degree as but one of the many little touches which shall make the reader see.

The first step in landscape description is, of course, the selection of the scene. If the writer is creating a definite picture of a real scene, something in the objects or their grouping has enlisted his interest as an observer and made the experience memorable to him. If he attempts to bring this special interest into prominence, he tends to subjective or impressionistic description. The means to this end have already been discussed in general. They are: selection and accumulation and enforcement of details which

harmonize with the desired impression, and omission and subdual of those of negative or incongruous tone.

The necessity for selection and omission is here deserving of special emphasis, inasmuch as the modern describer of landscape, having observed microscopically and being in sympathy with the existing demand for detailed realism, has every temptation to grow garrulous. It is well to reflect now and then on Stevenson's saying that "no two human beings ever talked about landscape for three minutes together," and consider how long one may reasonably hope to claim the reader's undivided attention to a landscape. One should present scenery briefly not only to escape tediousness, but to avoid that bewilderment of the imagination which must come to a reader who has crowded upon his mind images of many objects with multiplied details which he cannot either group into whole pictures or harmonize into whole impressions. It is the same problem as that which faces the painter who endeavors to interpret nature. Ruskin says:¹

"Impressiveness is destroyed by a multitude of contradictory facts, and the accumulation which is not harmonious is discordant. He who endeavors to unite simplicity with magnificence, to guide from solitude to festivity, and to contrast melancholy with mirth, must end by the production of confused inanity. There is a peculiar spirit possessed by every kind of scene; and although a point of contrast may sometimes enhance and exhibit this particular feeling more intensely, it must be only a point and not an equalized opposition. Every introduction of new and different feeling weakens the force of what has already been impressed, and the mingling of all emotions must conclude in apathy, as the mingling of all colors in white."

¹ Preface to *Modern Painters*, ed. 2, p. 39.

In landscape, then, economy of detail is desirable when it assists the reader's memory and imagination, when it preserves interest by banishing the dull and commonplace detail which any one could readily supply if he cared to, and when it emphasizes the chief matters by refusing to overload and obscure them.

Much of what has been said in regard to the necessity of careful grouping of details (pp. 45-57) is especially applicable to landscape. Some principle of grouping is essential to a unified impression. Whatever seems the most natural order for any landscape is the best, because stiffness and artificiality of procedure are never more objectionable than when one is trying to create an illusion of life by portraying natural scenes.

The way the eye actually took in a scene may give a simple scheme for arranging the details. One may count on its being a somewhat but not altogether orderly procedure; for the human eye, though it finds uninterrupted movement easier and pleasanter, is frequently caught by the near features just because they are large, outstanding, or in some way conspicuous. It may then make a rapid survey of practically all the objects in the foreground, proceeding afterward to a more leisurely survey of minor details in the background. If this were the actual order of observation, to follow it might or might not prove effective in description. The method would be instinctively discarded if one desired to produce the effect of climax by giving the main features prominence by position. Again, the reverse of this order of perception might very well be followed by one who is accustomed to surveying landscapes with an eye to total effects, to the massing of details, the large outlines—that is to say, by any one who sees pictures in natural scenery with something like the artist's eye. And it might easily occur to one, in describing a bit of scenery, to sketch in a background

rapidly in order to show up more effectively the outstanding features. The advantage of this method is that of leaving the main features firmly stamped on the reader's imagination at the close.

~~A very common method is the grouping of minor details about the major.~~ This is a combination of a natural principle—that of the actual space-relations of the objects—with an artistic principle, that of subdual of unimportant details to important. It has its chief justification in these facts: that a large, conspicuous figure often holds the observer's attention at the expense of many minor objects and so deserves a greater prominence in his description; and that it may also serve as a convenient point of reference in estimating the size and position of surrounding objects. Such an outstanding figure serving as the artistic centre of a landscape group will often do much to unify a scene which might otherwise fall apart into discrete fragments.

Those orders of detail which follow the natural movements of the human eye in methodical inspection are so simple as to need no comment. They call for no high degree of skill.

~~The panoramic landscape may require the use of a shifting point of view and hence the use of the narrative method.~~ An instance of this is the selection from Stevenson entitled "Across the Lozère" (p. 191).

Wherever outright transitions must be made, they should receive especial care. Because landscape description is more nearly pictorial in its aim than other kinds of description and hence is fuller of detail, and because the details are necessarily grouped according to some scheme, there is a danger of making the plan too obvious. Such an effect is almost as unpleasant as an amateur's water-color sketch with all the outlines of the objects rigidly pencilled in. The describer of a landscape must

know its exact outlines as thoroughly as a portrait painter knows anatomy; but he need not emphasize the outlines heavily, any more than the portrait painter needs to make all the bones and joints show up.

The use of landscape in fiction is coming, more and more, to be regarded as a matter of importance, because of what it contributes to the realism of the story. Yet, as has been said, it has already passed the zenith of fulness of detail. Sometimes long passages are still found, as in Hardy's description of the heath, or as in the splendid storm scene in "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel." Yet it is to be observed that the scenes are not separable from the story. The heath is simply a stage for a great human drama. And the storm and the ensuing calm are only outward symbols of a still greater turmoil in the heart of Richard Feverel. This is the real art in handling landscape in fiction—to subordinate it, make it contribute to the story. The cleverer novelists are beginning to dispense with the more elaborate pictorial effects, and to weave in descriptive passages with a deft touch here and there, so that the scenery never becomes conspicuous, but is always felt to be there in the background, serving a real purpose in the story, but never displacing even for a time a character or an incident. Kipling has best mastered this art of the interwoven background.

2. DESCRIPTIONS OF PEOPLE.

Descriptions of people are no less essential to the effect of lifelikeness in narrative writing than are descriptions of landscape and material objects, and to most readers they are far more interesting. They call for a habit of careful observation, for sympathetic appreciation, for experienced judgment and reflection. Excellent descriptions of people are seldom merely pictorial in effect. Of

course, a writer may wish, in describing a real person, to produce in the reader's mind an accurate image of the person's physiognomy; but, just as in portraits by great artists there is ever a hint of character, so here some conscious or unconscious emphasis on characteristic details serves as interpretation. And it is just because of these hints of character that we have a keener interest in the faces of human beings, even if they are commonplace or positively ugly, than we have in aspects of nature, however beautiful or pleasing. Character description and character exposition are inextricably interwoven. Each concrete appearance reads as a sign of something beneath the surface. The lines about the eyes and mouth would be no more important than those on the palms of the hand and the soles of the feet if it were not for what they hint of character. The mere mention of deep-set eyes suggests a trait or habit at the same time that it makes a picture. To the observant student of human nature, the contour of the head or even of single features, the set of the jaw, the way the lips meet, the way they part in a smile or a laugh, the whole characteristic play of the facial muscles under the stress of the emotions, the very quality of the voice, show up the temperament or disposition and subtly hint the deeper traits of mind and character. And this is not because he has made any special study of physiognomy or phrenology in the abstract—pseudo-sciences, at present, almost hopelessly entangling scientific truth with sham—but because he has been widely observant of the characters of men as he has become acquainted with them and keenly alert for the external signs. In judging real people he will often make mistakes and have to correct his first impressions; for the outward does not always suggest accurately the inward trait. There may be observed in many faces strikingly contradictory indications of character which may or may not be an index to actually

conflicting traits. After the real character comes to be understood, it may be that some of the misleading external indications can be explained away, as where, in "The House of the Seven Gables," Hawthorne disposes of poor Hepzibah's near-sighted scowl (p. 238).

After one has made up his mind about the true character of a person, he may be tempted, in revealing it to others, to give a neat summarizing sketch, a sort of abstract of traits systematically grouped and classified. This method is concise and economical but seldom interesting. We are attracted by descriptions and expositions of character chiefly because the subjects are human; and they seem very little human when they are so analyzed and classified. The most skilful portrayers of character present their subjects to the reader in the concrete, just as they actually appear, and by careful choice of details and just emphasis upon the traits regarded as most characteristic, weave into the concrete presentation of the appearance, bearing, habits, and so forth, their own conception of the character. No exposition of character, however excellent, can be quite certain of enlisting general interest unless it employs some concrete means of suggestion.

A large part of the work of the describer of people, then, lies in the noting and being able to suggest to others the little external hints of character. These will be found not only in the head and face, but in the whole body; in its habitual management and attitudes, in the walk, the gestures, the habits of speech. The little acts of daily life are often a fairer criterion of mental and moral traits than the larger act to which a man may be keyed up or driven in an emergency. The way he impresses his family, his servants, or even his dog, may be a safer clue to the real man than his reputation abroad. Even inanimate surroundings take on evidences of one's disposition and his tastes, and so come indirectly to reveal the man.

Habits of dress, choice and ordering of furniture and ornaments in a room may indicate not only good or bad taste, æsthetically speaking, but often considerable individuality. One must be careful, though, in the enthusiasm which accompanies a strong impression of character, not to read signs of it into the most innocent, non-committal objects. A case in point is the often-quoted description of Mr. Pecksniff, where Dickens constrains everything about the man—even to his dangling double eye-glass—to the expression of extreme morality.

The means of making an impression of a character prominent are the same as in dealing with other subjects—selection of details, proportion and position of salient details, repetition, and summarizing of the general impression.

The description of characters in fiction calls for some special comment. Not every story needs a full description of the characters. If the appearance of the actors has absolutely nothing to do with the reader's interest in them or their actions, the least said about it the better. If it is of interest for the conception of the character, it should still be remembered that the chief business of the story is to narrate, and that long descriptions are likely to interrupt the movement unpleasantly. The deliberate photographing of a person, bringing in all the details from head to foot, is undesirable for several reasons. It kills imagination in the reader by giving his mind no work to do, and it allows him no freedom to express his individual tastes. Besides this, it seems stiff and unnatural. It is unconvincing because it is not the way in which we commonly get our notion of the looks of real people.

Our impressions of personal appearance are a gradual resultant of repeated observations. The novelist has plenty of time to secure in his work this effect of slow cumulation of evidences. He may show us how his hero

or heroine looks from day to day—whenever the looks are of any real importance—and let us feel as if we were noting the changes just as we do in real life. Thackeray's description of Beatrix Esmond does contain two set pictures, but it has nevertheless this progressive character. Beatrix grows in beauty, varies from year to year, and all the changes are consistently developed. The same gradual rounding out of a pictorial impression may be found in George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver, whose description is nowhere complete and final, but is a series of changing aspects. In George Eliot's Silas Marner and in Dickens's Uriah Heep, a very vivid impression of appearance is made by this same cumulative method, with a recurrence, over and over again, to the most impressive features. In the case of Uriah Heep, the repetition of the impression is so frequent that the sketch may fairly be called a caricature.

Description of persons, like description of natural scenes, will best serve narration if it is interwoven with the thread of narrative. The people will seem more real if we are made to draw our conclusions as to their looks while they go on with their business in the story. Much of the description that an amateur would desire to include can be dispensed with altogether or presented indirectly, by effect upon others. The dramatic means of suggesting the appearance of characters in fiction is valuable because it is natural and informal, and because it does not seriously interrupt the movement of the story.

3. THE PRESENTATION OF STATES OF MIND AND FEELING.

The presentation of states of mind and feeling is properly a matter of exposition, but it can seldom be carried out with clearness or interest without recourse to con-

crete methods. Our judgments of others' thoughts and feelings are originally based upon concrete indications. We have interpreted the inner life from the way the people look, and talk, and act. It is but natural, then, that we should use in fiction concrete means of suggesting states of mind and feeling to the reader, instead of expounding them only by abstract analysis.

The effective describer of mental states needs several qualifications: observation, that he may gather suggestive data; imagination, that he may fill out the suggestions; a deep, inner life of thought and feeling; and a habit of analysis and reflection, that he may test his conclusions as to other people's states of mind under certain conditions by a reference to his own. He needs also, for any large portrayal, sympathy.

In addition to the direct exposition of mental states, there are several means by which they may be suggested to the reader's mind. The simplest are these: the full presentation of the causes which produced them; and the actions and appearance of those affected by them. One may take, for example, the feeling of fear, in a variety of manifestations, and note the use made of causes and effects as the indirect means of presenting the emotion itself. Stevenson's story of the siege of the round-house ("Kidnapped," see p. 258 of text), where the boy engages in his first fight for life, and the selection from "Memoirs of an Islet" (page 259), showing the strong man's fear of the forces of nature, illustrate the suggestion of the quality by clear presentation of the causes and effects. Victor Hugo's account of the fear of Cosette, alone in the woods at night (page 254) contains a larger proportion of abstract analysis, but does not neglect to present physical sensations and their causes as the reasons for the child's whole state of feeling. The same concrete method vivifies the reader's

conception of the awful dread of being drawn down in the embrace of the whirl in Poe's "A Descent into the Maelström." One may find it of interest to compare various ways of suggesting the kind of fear produced by the feeling of the presence of the supernatural: the simple direct statement of the physical effects of the seeing of the vision by Eliphaz (Bible. Book of Job); the more artful suggestion of the presence of the supernatural in Kipling's ghost-stories; and the exaggerated portrayal in Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow." To make any fine distinctions in the quality, one must resort to something more suggestive than direct analysis; one must let the reader be fully acquainted with the causes and results of the emotion; and these, taken together with the reader's insight into other phases of the person's character, will enable him to realize pretty vividly his state of mind at any critical point in the progress of the story. Excellent analyses of mental states, mingling concrete with abstract methods are Allen's glimpse into the heart of Father Palemon ("The White Cowl," see page 260), and Meredith's portrayal of a crisis in the life of Richard Feverel ("The Ordeal of Richard Feverel," page 262).

As fiction comes less and less to be a mere recounting of incidents and more and more to be a portrayal of the life of man, his whole personality and his surroundings, an increased emphasis is thrown on the function of description in narrative writing, which is, to help the reader to a vivid realization not only of the characters, but of the community in which they live.

PART II.—ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL

THE SENSE ELEMENT IN DESCRIPTION

LA RICCIA AT NOONDAY¹

JOHN RUSKIN

It had been wild weather when I left Rome, and all across the Campagna the clouds were sweeping in sulphurous blue, with a clap of thunder or two, and breaking gleams of sun along the Claudian aqueduct lighting up the infinity of its arches like the bridge of chaos. But as I climbed the long slope of the Alban mount, the storm swept finally to the north, and the noble outline of the domes of Albano and graceful darkness of its ilex grove rose against pure streaks of alternate blue and amber, the upper sky gradually flushing through the last fragments of rain-cloud in deep, palpitating azure, half ether and half dew. The noon-day sun came slanting down the rocky slopes of La Riccia, and its masses of entangled and tall foliage, whose autumnal tints were mixed with the wet verdure of a thousand evergreens, were penetrated with it as with rain. I cannot call it color, it was conflagration. Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle, the rejoicing trees sank into the valley in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life;

¹ From *Modern Painters*, v. 1, part 2, sec. 2, ch. 2. By permission of Longmans, Green, & Co.

each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sunbeam, first a torch, and then an emerald. Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the gray walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted and let them fall. Every glade of grass burned like the golden floor of heaven, opening in sudden gleams as the foliage broke and closed above it, as sheet-lightning opens in a cloud at sunset; the motionless masses of dark rock—dark though flushed with scarlet lichen,—casting their quiet shadows across its restless radiance, the fountain underneath them filling its marble hollow with blue mist and fitful sound, and over all—the multitudinous bars of amber and rose, the sacred clouds that have no darkness, and only exist to illumine, were seen in fathomless intervals between the solemn and orbéd repose of the stone pines, passing to lose themselves in the last, white, blinding lustre of the measureless line where the Campagna melted into the blaze of the sea.

THE MOSSES¹

JOHN RUSKIN

The mosses seem to set themselves consentfully and deliberately to the task of producing the most exquisite harmonies of color in their power. They will not conceal the form of the rock, but will gather over it in little brown bosses, like small cushions of velvet made of mixed threads of dark ruby silk and gold, rounded over

¹ From *Modern Painters*, vol. 4, part 5, chapter 11. By permission of Longmans, Green, & Co. .

more subdued films of white and gray, with lightly crisped and curled edges like hoar frost on fallen leaves, and minute clusters of upright orange stalks with pointed caps, and fibres of deep green, and gold, and faint purple passing into black, all woven together, and following with unimagined fineness of gentle growth the undulation of the stone they cherish, until it is charged with color so that it can receive no more; and instead of looking rugged, or cold, or stern, as anything that a rock is held to be at heart, it seems to be clothed with a soft, dark leopard skin, embroidered with arabesque of purple and silver.

AUTUMN WOODS¹

WILSON FLAGG

WHEN the golden-rods in field and border have perceptibly faded, and we are growing weary of the monotony of summer landscape, autumn, the great limner of the forest, spreads over the earth new and enchanting pictures. Dim lights spring up daily among the shadows of the trees, and grove, copse, and thicket suffer a gradual metamorphosis. The woods are illuminated by such an array of colors that their late dark recesses appear to have the brightness of sunshine. Where a few days since there was but a shady obscurity of faded green, there gleams a luminous beauty from myriads of tinted leaves. As the twilight of the year comes on, the trees appear one after another in their new garniture, like the clouds of evening, as sunset deepens into darkness.

There is no scene in nature more purely delightful than the autumn woods when they have attained the

¹ From *A Year Among the Trees*. By permission of Dana Estes & Co.

fulness of their splendor. The sentiment of melancholy which is associated with the fall of the leaf increases our susceptibility to be affected by these parting glories of the year. So sweetly blended are the lights and colors in this gorgeous array, that no sense is wearied. The very imperfection of the hues gives a healthful zest to the spectacle, causing it never to weary like the more brilliant colors of a flower-bed. The hues of sunrise are more ethereal and exhilarating; but there is a sober mellowness in the tints of autumn that inspires the most healthful temper of mind. Far and near, from the wooded hills that display a variegated spectacle of gold, scarlet, and purple; from turrets of rocks embroidered with ferns and sumach; from old winding roads and lanes, hedged with a countless variety of gleaming shrubs, and rustic cottages half covered with scarlet creeper, down to the crimson patches of whortleberry-bushes, on the plains and in the valleys,—all is serenity and beauty. . . .

Though every one admires the beauty of autumn woods, not many are aware how imperfect are the colors that make up this gorgeous pageant. We speak of the scarlet and crimson of the maple, the oak, and the tupelo, and of many shrubs that equal them in brilliancy. But there is very little pure scarlet, crimson, or purple among these tints. If it were otherwise they would afford us less pleasure. In that case our senses would be intoxicated; now they are healthfully as well as agreeably stimulated. Pure colors spread over so wide an extent of surface would be too intense for perfect enjoyment. All the dyes of autumn foliage are sobered by the admixture of some earthly hue, something that prevents their rivalling the tints of heaven.

Green and yellow are often seen in their purity in the leaves of trees; crimson and scarlet are seldom pure, except in some parts of the brightest leaves. Even their

green is not perfect, save in that stage of their development that precedes their full expansion. After this period, as the landscape-painter well knows, all verdure is tarnished and rusty. Indeed, the colors of leaves will not bear comparison with those of flowers, either in purity or variety; yet when viewed from a distance, and illuminated by sunshine, they seem nearly pure. Red leaves of different shades in sunshine produce at a distance the effect of crimson or scarlet, chocolate hues that of purple, and browns that of orange.

The hues of autumn are not very conspicuous before the middle of September, and it is worthy of notice that the brightest and purest colors are seen at the time when three fourths of the trees still remain unchanged. As one after another assumes its ruddy, golden and purple hues, the earlier and more brilliant drop their leaves; and some are entirely denuded, while others are fully covered with foliage and verdure. Even different individuals of the same species, of maples especially, manifest a great difference of habit in this respect, caused in some cases by the peculiarities of their situation. Trees in swamps and low grounds lose their leaves earlier than the occupants of a deep soil in the uplands.

Some species are perfectly uniform in their colors. The poplar and birch, for example, are invariably yellow: the sumach and whortleberry are chiefly red; while the maples display as many colors as if they were of different species. But each individual tree shows nearly the same every year, as apple-trees bear fruit of the same tints from year to year. Two red maples growing side by side are seldom alike, and in a group of them you will see almost as many shades of color as trees. Some are entirely yellow, others scarlet, some crimson, purple, or orange, others variegated with several of these colors. There is more uniformity in the tints of the sugar-maple.

I have seen long rows of this species that were only yellow and orange, though its colors generally vary from orange to scarlet. Purple and crimson are confined chiefly to the red maple; I have seen in different individuals of this species all the hues that are ever displayed in the autumn woods. The red maples, more than all other trees combined, are the crowning glory of a New England autumn. The sugar-maple, though more brilliant, has a narrower range of colors.

As early as the last week in August, we perceive the tinting of a few red maples, which always exhibit the earliest change. Sometimes a solitary branch is tinted, while the remainder of the foliage is green, as if something affecting its vitality had prematurely colored it. Frequently the coloring process begins at the top; the purple crown of autumn is placed upon the green brow of summer, and we behold the two seasons represented at once in the same tree.

The first coloration is usually seen at the veins of the leaf, extending outwardly until the whole is tinted. Sometimes it appears in spots, like drops of blood upon the green surface; and in this case the leaf usually remains spotted. In the foliage of trees that assume a variety of colors, yellows generally predominate in the interior of the mass, red and purple on the outside. In the red maple, and less frequently in the rock-maple when in a protected situation, the leaves are often formally variegated with figures of yellow, red, green, and purple. Those of the poison-sumach, the cornel, and the snowy mespilus, are sometimes beautifully striated with yellow or orange upon a darker ground; but I have searched the woods in vain to find any other than a maple leaf configured like a butterfly's wing. . . .

When all the circumstances attending the season have been favorable to the tints of autumn, there is no tree of

the forest that would attract more admiration from the beautiful sobriety of its colors than the American ash. But this tree is so easily affected by drought, that after a dry summer its leaves fall prematurely and its tints are imperfect. The colors of the ash are quite unique, and distinguish it from all other trees. Under favorable circumstances its coloring process is nearly uniform. It begins with a general impurpling of the whole mass of foliage nearly at the same time, and its gradual changes remind me of those observed in sea-mosses during the process of bleaching. There is an invariable succession of these tints, as in the brightening beams of morn. They are first of a dark bronze, turning from this to a chocolate, then to a violet brown, and finally to a salmon-color, or yellow with a slight shade of lilac. When the leaves are faded nearly yellow, they are ready to drop from the tree. It is remarkable that, with all this variety of hues, neither crimson nor any shade of scarlet is ever seen in the ash. It ought to be remembered that the gradations of autumn tints in all cases are in the order of those of sunrise, from dark to lighter hues, and never the reverse. I make no reference to the browns of dead leaves, which are darker than yellow or orange, from which they turn. I speak only of the changes of leaves before they are seared or dry.

After the middle of October, the oaks are the most conspicuous ornaments of the forest; but they are seldom brilliant. In their foliage there is a predominance of what we call leather-colors, with a considerable mixture of certain shades of red that are peculiar to the oak. We rarely find pure yellow or scarlet leaves in the foliage of any species of oak. The color of the scarlet oak is nearer a purple or crimson than any other shade of red. The white oak turns, with but little variation, to an ashen-purple or impure violet. The black and red oaks

display varying and imperfect shades of drab and orange. The oaks are remarkable for the persistence of their foliage, and for the duration of their tints, which are chiefly the brown and russet of dead leaves with a lively polish. Long after other deciduous trees have become leafless, the various sombre shades of the different oaks cast a melancholy tinge over the waning beauty of the forest.

THE SONG-SPARROW¹

JOHN BURROUGHS

Its chief feature was one long, clear high note, very strong, sweet, and plaintive. It sprang out of the trills and quavers of the first part of the bird-song, like a long arc or parabola of sound. To my mental vision it rose far up against the blue, and turned sharply downward again and finished in more trills and quavers. I had never before heard anything like it. It was the usual long, silvery note in the sparrow's song greatly increased; indeed, the whole breath and force of the bird put in this note, so that you caught little else than this silver loop of sound.

SOUNDS FROM TREES²

WILSON FLAGG

"THE earliest chant," says Momsen, "in the view of the Romans, was that which the trees sang to themselves, in the green solitudes of the forest. The whisperings and

¹ From Riverby, page 170. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

² From A Year Among the Trees. By permission of Dana Estes & Co.

pipings of the *favorable spirit* in the grove were repeated by the singer, with the accompaniment of the pipe." Certain trees belonging to the sacred groves gave oracular sounds, which were interpreted by musicians, and received by all men with faith and reverence. From the earliest ages men have listened to sounds from trees as music and as the voice of some deity, affording auguries of future events; for, as they reasoned, if a deity speaks to us, what sounds would be a more appropriate medium of communication than those of the trees which formed their temples and their altars? The sanctity attributed to certain groves by the ancients was probably owing to some peculiar sounds emitted by the trees, no less than to the grandeur and impressiveness of their assemblages. ✓ Every tree, when swept by the winds, gives a sound in harmony with the character of its leaves and spray. The sounds from the lofty branches of firs and pines remind the listener of the murmuring of waters, and inspire the most agreeable sensations. How often have I sat under the shade of a pine wood, and listened to the fancied roaring of the distant waves of the sea, as the winds passed through their foliage. When the breeze commences, we hear the first soft rippling of the waves; as it increases, succeeding waves of fuller swell flow tremulously upon the strand, and, as the wind subsides, melt into silence as they recede from the shore. Other trees produce very different sounds. The colors of their leaves, and the glittering lights from their more or less refractive surfaces, do not differ more than the modifications of sound drawn from them by the passing winds. Every tree is a delicate musical instrument, that reminds us of the character of the tree and the season of the year, from the mellow soothing tones of willow leaves in summer to the sharp rustling of the dry oak-leaf that tells of the arrival of winter. . . .

When a strong wind prevails, the leaves of all trees are put in motion, and their sounds cannot be distinguished; and during a storm the roar of winds among their branches is almost deafening. This is the grand chorus of the elements; but the sounds that affect us most agreeably are such as come from light movements of the wind and harmonize with the warbling and chirping of birds. It is the aspen that gives out those lulling melodies that spring from the gentle gales of summer. When we are sitting at an open window on a still evening, or sauntering in a wood, or musing in the shade of a quiet nook, when the wind is so calm that the hum of the invisible insect-swarms, hovering in the air, is plainly audible, then is the trembling motion of the aspen leaves peculiarly significant of the serenity of the elements. They produce a tranquilizing sound, associated with rest in the languor of noonday, or with watching in the still hours of a summer night.

MOTIONS OF TREES¹

WILSON FLAGG

SOME trees, having stiff branches with flexible leaves, do not bend to a moderate breeze, but their foliage readily yields to the motion of the wind. This habit is observed in the oak and the ash, in all trees that have a pendulous foliage and upright or horizontal branches. The poplars possess this habit in a remarkable degree, and it is proverbial in the aspen. It is also conspicuous in the common pear-tree and in the small white birch. Other trees, like the American elm, wave their branches gracefully, with but little apparent motion of their leaves. We observe the same habit in the weeping willow, and indeed in all

¹ From *A Year Among the Trees*, pages 100 ff. By permission of Dana Estes & Co.

trees with a long and flexible spray. The wind produces by its action on these a general sweeping movement without any rustle. It is easy to observe, when walking in a grove, that the only graceful motions come from trees with drooping branches, because these alone are long and slender.

The very rapid motion of the leaves of the aspen has given origin to some remarkable superstitions. The Highlanders of Scotland believe the wood of this tree to be that of which the holy cross was made, and that its leaves are consequently never allowed to rest. Impressed with the awfulness of the tragedy of the crucifixion, they are constantly indicating to the winds the terrors that agitate them. The small white birch displays considerable of the same motion of the leaves; but we take little notice of it, because they are softer and produce less of a rustling sound. The flickering lights and shadows observed when walking under these trees, on a bright noonday, have always been admired. All these habits awaken our interest in trees and other plants by assimilating them to animated things.

Much of the beauty of the silver poplar comes from its glittering lights, when it presents the green upper surface of its foliage, alternating rapidly with the white silvery surface beneath. This we may readily perceive even in cloudy weather, but in the bright sunshine the contrasts are very brilliant. In all trees, however, we observe this glittering beauty of motion in the sunshine. The under part of leaves being less glossy than the upper part, there is in the assemblage the same tremulous lustre that appears on the rippled surface of a lake by moonlight.

We observe occasionally other motions which I have not described, such as the uniform bending of the whole tree. In a strong current of wind, tall and slender trees especially attract our attention by bending over uniformly like a

plume. This habit is often seen in the white birch, a tree that in its usual assemblages takes a plume-like form. When a whole grove of white birches is seen thus bending over in one direction from the action of a brisk wind, they seem like a procession of living forms. In a storm we watch with peculiar interest the bending forms of certain tall elms, such as we often see in clearings, with their heads bowed down almost to the ground by the force of the tempest. It is only the waves of the ocean and the tossing of its billows that can afford us so vivid an impression of the sublimity of a tempest as the violent swaying of a forest and the roaring of the winds among the lofty tree-tops.

THE HAWK IN FLIGHT¹

JOHN BURROUGHS

AUGUST is the month of the high-sailing hawks. The hen-hawk is the most noticeable. He likes the haze and calm of these long, warm days. He is a bird of leisure, and seems always at his ease. How beautiful and majestic are his movements! So self-poised and easy, such an entire absence of haste, such a magnificent amplitude of circles and spirals, such a haughty, imperial grace, and, occasionally, such daring aërial evolutions!

With slow, leisurely movement, rarely vibrating his pinions, he mounts and mounts in an ascending spiral till he appears a mere speck against the summer sky; then, if the mood seizes him, with wings half closed like a bent bow, he will cleave the air almost perpendicularly, as if intent on dashing himself to pieces against the earth; but, on nearing the ground, he suddenly mounts again on broad, expanded wing, as if rebounding upon the air, and

¹ From *The Return of the Birds*, in *Wake-Robin*, p. 49. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

sails leisurely away. It is the sublimest feat of the season. One holds his breath till he sees him rise again.

If inclined to a more gradual and less precipitous descent, he fixes his eye on some distant point in the earth beneath him, and thither bends his course. He is still almost meteoric in his speed and boldness. You see his path down the heavens, straight as a line; if near, you hear the rush of his wings; his shadow hurtles across the fields, and in an instant you see him quietly perched upon some low tree or decayed stub in a swamp or meadow, with reminiscences of frogs and mice stirring in his maw.

When the south wind blows, it is a study to see three or four of these air-kings at the head of the valley far up toward the mountain, balancing and oscillating upon the strong current: now quite stationary, except for a slight tremulous motion like the poise of a rope-dancer, then rising and falling in long undulations, and seeming to resign themselves passively to the wind; or, again, sailing high and level far above the mountain's peak, no bluster and haste, but, as stated, occasionally a terrible earnestness and speed. Fire at one as he sails overhead, and, unless wounded badly, he will not change his course or gait.

His flight is a perfect picture of repose in motion. It strikes the eye as more surprising than the flight of the pigeon and swallow even, in that the effort put forth is so uniform and delicate as to escape observation, giving to the movement an air of buoyancy and perpetuity, the effluence of power rather than the conscious application of it.

THE PREDATORY BLACK SNAKE¹

JOHN BURROUGHS

HE cautiously raised himself up, his tongue flaming from his mouth the while, curved over the nest, and, with wavy, subtle motions, explored the interior. I can conceive of nothing more overpoweringly terrible to an unsuspecting family of birds than the sudden appearance above their domicile of the head and neck of this arch-enemy. It is enough to petrify the blood in their veins. Not finding the object of his search, he came streaming down from the nest to a lower limb, and commenced extending his researches in other directions, sliding stealthily through the branches, bent on capturing one of the parent birds. That a legless, wingless creature should move with such ease and rapidity where only birds and squirrels are considered at home, lifting himself up, letting himself down, running out on the yielding boughs, and traversing with marvellous celerity the whole length and breadth of the thicket, was truly surprising. One thinks of the great myth, of the Tempter and the "cause of all our woe," and wonders if the Arch One is not now playing off some of his pranks before him. Whether we call it snake or devil matters little. I could but admire his terrible beauty, however; his black, shining folds, his easy, gliding movement, head erect, eyes glistening, tongue playing like subtle flame, and the invisible means of his almost winged locomotion.

¹ From *The Return of the Birds*, in *Wake-Robin*, p. 43. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

THE FALL OF SCHAFFHAUSEN¹

JOHN RUSKIN

STAND for half an hour beside the fall of Schaffhausen, on the north side where the rapids are long, and watch how the vault of water first bends, unbroken, in pure, polished velocity, over the arching rocks at the brow of the cataract, covering them with a dome of crystal twenty feet thick—so swift that its motion is unseen except when a foam globe from above darts over it like a falling star; and how the trees are lighted above it under all their leaves, at the instant that it breaks into foam; and how all the hollows of that foam burn with green fire like so much scattering chrysoprase; and how, ever and anon, startling you with its white flash, a jet of spray leaps hissing out of the fall like a rocket, bursting in the wind and driven away in dust, filling the air with light; and how, through the curdling wreaths of the restless, crashing abyss below, the blue of the water, paled by the foam in its body, shows purer than the sky through white rain-cloud; while the shuddering iris stoops in tremulous stillness over all, fading and flushing alternately through the choking spray and shattered sunshine, hiding itself at last among the thick golden leaves which toss to and fro in sympathy with the wild water; their dripping masses lifted at intervals, like sheaves of loaded corn, by some stronger gush from the cataract, and bowed again upon the mossy rocks as its roar dies away; the dew gushing from their thick branches through drooping clusters of emerald herbage, and sparkling in white threads along the dark rocks of the shore, feeding the lichens which chase and checker them with purple and silver.

¹ From *Modern Painters*, vol. 1, part 2, sec. 5, ch. 2. By permission of Longmans, Green, & Co.

A KENTUCKY FOREST¹

JAMES LANE ALLEN

THE middle of a fragrant afternoon of May in the green wilderness of Kentucky: the year 1795.

High overhead ridges of many-peaked cloud—the gleaming, wandering Alps of the blue ether; outstretched far below, the warming bosom of the earth, throbbing with the hope of maternity. Two spirits abroad in the air, encountering each other and passing into one: the spirit of scentless spring left by melting snows and the spirit of scented summer born with the earliest buds. The road through the forest one of those wagon-tracks that were being opened from the clearings of the settlers, and that wound along beneath trees of which those now seen in Kentucky are the unworthy survivors—oaks and walnuts, maples and elms, centuries old, gnarled, massive, drooping, majestic, through whose arches the sun hurled down only some solitary spear of gold, and over whose gray-mossed roots some cold brook crept in silence; with here and there billowy open spaces of wild rye, buffalo grass, and clover on which the light fell in sheets of radiance; with other spots so dim that for ages no shoot had sprung from the deep black mould; blown to and fro across this wagon-road, odors of ivy, pennyroyal, and mint, mingled with the fragrance of the wild grape; flitting to and fro across it, as low as the violet-beds, as high as the sycamores, unnumbered kinds of birds, some of which like the paroquet are long since vanished.

¹James Lane Allen, *The Choir Invisible*. By permission of The Macmillan Co.

THE RUKH IN SPRING¹

RUDYARD KIPLING

IN spring the *rukḥ* put out a few leaves, but lay dry and still, untouched by the finger of the year, waiting for rain. Only there was then more calling and roaring in the dark on a quiet night, the tumult of a battle-royal among the tigers, the bellowing of an arrogant buck, or the steady wood-chopping of an old boar sharpening his tushes against a bole. Then Gisborne laid aside his little-used gun altogether, for it was to him a sin to kill. In summer, through the furious May heats, the *rukḥ* reeled in the haze, and Gisborne watched for the first sign of curling smoke that should betray a forest fire. Then came the Rains with a roar, and the *rukḥ* was blotted out in fetch after fetch of warm mist, and the broad leaves drummed the night through under the big drops; and there was a noise of running water, and of juicy green stuff crackling where the wind struck it, and the lightning wove patterns behind the dense matting of foliage till the sun broke loose again and the *rukḥ* stood with hot flanks smoking to the newly washed sky. Then the heat and the dry cold subdued everything to tiger-colour again.

THE TIME OF NEW TALK²

RUDYARD KIPLING

. . . THE morning mist hung below them in bands of white and green. As the sun rose it changed into bubbling

¹ From The Second Jungle Book: In the Rukh. Copyright by Rudyard Kipling. Used by permission.

² From The Second Jungle Book: The Spring Running. Copyright by Rudyard Kipling. Used by permission.

seas of red gold, churned off, and let the low rays stripe the dried grass on which Mowgli and Bagheera were resting. It was the end of the cold weather, the leaves and the trees looked worn and faded, and there was a dry, ticking rustle everywhere when the wind blew. A little leaf rap-tap-tapped furiously against a twig, as a single leaf caught in a current will. . . .

In an Indian Jungle the seasons slide one into the other almost without division. There seem to be only two—the wet and the dry; but if you look closely below the torrents of rain and the clouds of char and dust you will find all four going round in their regular ring. Spring is the most wonderful, because she has not to cover a clean, bare field with new leaves and flowers, but to drive before her and to put away the hanging-on, over-surviving raffle of half-green things which the gentle winter has suffered to live, and to make the partly-dressed stale earth feel new and young once more. And this she does so well that there is no spring in the world like the Jungle spring.

There is one day when all things are tired, and the very smells, as they drift in the heavy air, are old and used. One cannot explain this, but it feels so. Then there is another day—to the eye nothing whatever has changed—when all the smells are new and delightful, and the whiskers of the Jungle People quiver to their roots, and the winter hair comes away from their sides in long, dragged locks. Then, perhaps, a little rain falls, and all the trees and the bushes and the bamboos and the mosses and the juicy-leaved plants wake with a noise of growing that you can almost hear, and under this noise runs, day and night, a deep hum. *That* is the noise of the spring—a vibrating boom which is neither bees, nor falling water, nor the wind in the tree-tops, but the purring of the warm, happy world.

Up to this year Mowgli had always delighted in the turn of the seasons. It was he who generally saw the first Eye-of-the-Spring deep down among the grasses, and the first bank of spring clouds, which are like nothing else in the Jungle. His voice could be heard in all sorts of wet, star-lighted, blossoming places, helping the big frogs through their choruses, or mocking the little upside-down owls that hoot through the white nights. Like all his people, spring was the season he chose for his flittings—moving, for the mere joy of rushing through the warm air, thirty, forty, or fifty miles between twilight and the morning star, and coming back panting and laughing and wreathed with strange flowers. The Four did not follow him on these wild ringings of the Jungle, but went off to sing songs with other wolves. The Jungle people are very busy in the spring, and Mowgli could hear them grunting and screaming and whistling according to their kind. Their voices then are different from their voices at other times of the year, and that is one of the reasons why spring in the Jungle is called the Time of New Talk.

. . . It was a perfect white night, as they call it. All green things seemed to have made a month's growth since the morning. The branch that was yellow-leaved the day before dripped sap when Mowgli broke it. The mosses curled deep and warm over his feet, the young grass had no cutting edges, and all the voices of the Jungle boomed, like one deep harp-string touched by the moon—the Moon of New Talk, who splashed her light full on rock and pool, slipped it between trunk and creeper, and sifted it through a million leaves. Forgetting his unhappiness, Mowgli sang aloud with pure delight as he settled into his stride. . . . When he tired of ground-going he threw up his hands monkey-fashion to the nearest creeper, and seemed to

float rather than to climb up into the thin branches, whence he would follow a tree-road till his mood changed, and he shot downward in a long, leafy curve to the levels again. There were still, hot hollows surrounded by wet rocks where he could hardly breathe for the heavy scents of the night flowers and the bloom along the creeper buds; dark avenues where the moonlight lay in belts as regular as checkered marbles in a church aisle; thickets where the wet young growth stood breast-high about him and threw its arms round the waist; and hill-tops crowned with broken rock, where he leaped from stone to stone above the lairs of the frightened little foxes. He would hear, very faint and far off, the chug-drug of a boar sharpening his tusks on a bole; and would come across the great gray brute all alone, scribing and rending the bark of a tall tree, his mouth dripping with foam and his eyes blazing like fire. Or he would turn aside to the sound of clashing horns and hissing grunts, and dash past a couple of furious sambhur, staggering to and fro with lowered heads, striped with blood that showed black in the moonlight. Or at some rushing ford he would hear Jacala the Crocodile bellowing like a bull, or disturb a twined knot of the Poison People, but before they could strike he would be away and across the glistening shingle, deep in the Jungle again.

So he ran, sometimes shouting, sometimes singing to himself, the happiest thing in all the Jungle that night, till the smell of the flowers warned him that he was near the marshes, and those lay far beyond his furthest hunting-grounds.

THE LAMA¹

RUDYARD KIPLING

THE lama, very straight and erect, the deep folds of his yellow clothing slashed with black in the light of the *parao* fires precisely as a knotted tree-trunk is slashed with the shadow of the long sun, addressed a tinselled and lacquered *ruth* which burned like a many-coloured jewel in the same uncertain light. The patterns on the gold-worked curtains ran up and down, melting and re-forming as the folds shook and quivered to the night wind; and when the talk grew more earnest, the jewelled forefinger snapped out little sparks of light between the embroideries. Behind the cart was a wall of uncertain darkness speckled with little fires and alive with half-caught forms and faces and shadows. The voices of early evening had settled down to one soothing hum whose deepest note was the steady chumping of the bullocks above their chopped straw, and whose highest was the tinkle of a Bengali dancing girl's *sitar*. Most men had eaten and were deep in their gurgling, grunting hookahs, which in full blast sounded like bull-frogs.

NIGHTFALL²

RUDYARD KIPLING

By this time the sun was driving broad golden spokes through the lower branches of the mango-trees; the parakeets and doves were coming home in their hundreds;

¹From *Kim*, p. 112. Copyright, 1900, by Rudyard Kipling. Used by permission.

²*Ibid.*, p. 100 ff. Copyright, 1900, by Rudyard Kipling. Used by permission.

the chattering, gray-backed Seven Sisters, talking over the day's adventures, walked back and forth in twos and threes, almost under the feet of the travellers; and scuffling and shufflings in the branches showed that the bats were ready to go out on the night-picket. Swiftly the light gathered itself together, painted for an instant the faces and the cart-wheels and the bullocks' horns as red as blood. Then the night fell, changing the touch of the air, drawing a low, even haze, like a gossamer veil of blue across the face of the country, and bringing out, keen and distinct, the smell of wood-smoke and cattle, and the good scent of wheaten cakes cooked on ashes.

DAWN¹

RUDYARD KIPLING

THE diamond-bright dawn woke men and cows and bullocks together. Kim sat up and yawned, shook himself, and thrilled with delight. This was seeing the world in real truth; this was life as he would have it—bustling and shouting, the buckling of belts, and beating of bullocks and creaking of wheels, lighting of fires and cooking of food, and new sights at every turn of the approving eye. The morning-mist swept off in a whirl of silver; the parrots shot away to some distant river in shrieking green hosts; all the well-wheels within earshot were at work. India was awake, and Kim was in the middle of it.

¹ From Kim, p. 115. Copyright, 1900, by Rudyard Kipling. Used by permission.

A NIGHT AMONG THE PINES¹

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

NIGHT is a dead, monotonous period under a roof; but in the open world it passes lightly, with its stars and dews and perfumes, and the hours are marked by changes in the face of Nature. What seems a kind of temporal death to people choked between walls and curtains, is only a light and living slumber to the man who sleeps afieid. All night long he can hear Nature breathing deeply and freely; even as she takes her rest she turns and smiles; and there is one stirring hour unknown to those who dwell in houses, when a wakeful influence goes abroad over the sleeping hemisphere, and all the out-door world are on their feet. It is then that the cock first crows, not this time to announce the dawn, but like a cheerful watchman speeding the course of the night. Cattle awake on the meadows; sheep break their fast on dewy hill-sides, and change to a new lair among the ferns; and houseless men who have lain down with the fowls open their dim eyes and behold the beauty of the night.

At what inaudible summons, at what gentle touch of Nature, are all these sleepers thus recalled in the same hour to life? Do the stars rain down an influence, or do we share some thrill of mother earth below our resting bodies? Even shepherds and old country-folk, who are the deepest read in these arcana, have not a guess as to the means or purpose of this nightly resurrection. Towards two in the morning they declare the thing takes place; and neither know nor inquire further. And at least it is a pleasant incident. We are disturbed in our slumber only,

¹ From *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

like the luxurious Montaigne, "that we may the better and more sensibly relish it." We have a moment to look upon the stars, and there is a special pleasure for some minds in the reflection that we share the impulse with all out-door creatures in our neighborhood, that we have escaped out of the *Bastille* of civilization, and are become, for the time being, a mere kindly animal and a sheep of Nature's flock.

When that hour came to me among the pines, I awakened thirsty. My tin was standing by me half full of water. I emptied it at a draught; and feeling broad awake after this internal cold aspersion, sat upright to make a cigarette. The stars were clear, coloured, and jewel-like, but not frosty. A faint silvery vapour stood for the Milky Way. All around me the black fir-points stood upright and stock-still. By the whiteness of the pack-saddle, I could see Modestine walking round and round at the length of her tether; I could hear her steadily munching at the sward; but there was not another sound, save the indescribable quiet talk of the runnel over the stones. I lay lazily smoking and studying the colour of the sky, as we call the void of space, from where it showed a reddish gray behind the pines to where it showed a glossy blue-black between the stars. As if to be more like a pedlar, I wear a silver ring. This I could see faintly shining as I raised or lowered the cigarette; and at each whiff the inside of my hand was illuminated, and became for a second the highest light in the landscape.

A faint wind, more like a moving coolness than a stream of air, passed down the glade from time to time; so that even in my great chamber the air was being renewed all night long. I thought with horror of the inn at *Chasse-radès* and the congregated nightcaps; with horror of the nocturnal prowesses of clerks and students, of hot theatres and pass-keys and close rooms. I have not often enjoyed

a more serene possession of myself, nor felt more independent of material aids. The outer world, from which we cower into our houses, seemed after all a gentle habitable place; and night after night a man's bed, it seemed, was laid and waiting for him in the fields, where God keeps an open house.

THE PERSONAL ELEMENT IN DESCRIPTION

THE CAMPAGNA OF ROME¹

JOHN RUSKIN

PERHAPS there is no more impressive scene on earth than the solitary extent of the Campagna of Rome under evening light. Let the reader imagine himself for a moment withdrawn from the sounds and motion of the living world, and sent forth alone into this wild and wasted plain. The earth yields and crumbles beneath his foot, tread he never so lightly, for its substance is white, hollow, and carious, like the dusty wreck of the bones of men. The long knotted grass waves and tosses feebly in the evening wind, and the shadows of its motion shake feverishly along the banks of ruin that lift themselves to the sunlight. Hillocks of mouldering earth heave around him, as if the dead beneath were struggling in their sleep; scattered blocks of black stone, foursquare, remnants of mighty edifices, not one left upon another, lie upon them to keep them down. A dull purplish haze stretches level along the desert, veiling its spectral wrecks of massy ruins, on whose rents the red light rests like dying fire on defiled altars. The blue ridge of the Alban mount lifts itself against a solemn space of green, clear, quiet sky. Watch-towers of dark clouds stand steadfastly along the promontories of the Apennines. From the plain to the mountains, the shattered aqueducts, pier

¹ From *Modern Painters*, preface to second edition, pages xl-xli. By permission of Longmans, Green, & Co.

beyond pier, melt into the darkness, like shadowy and countless troops of funeral mourners, passing from a nation's grave.

A FARM-HOUSE¹

HAMLIN GARLAND

THE rain was still falling, sweeping down from the half-seen hills, wreathing the wooded peaks with a gray garment of mist, and filling the valley with a whitish cloud.

✧ It fell around the house drearily. It ran down the tubs placed to catch it, dripped from the mossy pump, and drummed on the upturned milk pails, and upon the brown and yellow beehives under the maple trees. The chickens seemed depressed, but the irrepressible blue-jay screamed amid it all, with the same insolent spirit, his plumage untarnished by the wet. The barnyard showed a horrible mixture of mud and mire, through which Howard caught glimpses of the men slumping to and fro without more additional protection than a ragged coat and a shapeless felt hat. ✧

In the sitting-room where his mother sat sewing there was not an ornament, save the etching he had brought. The clock stood on a small shelf, its dial so much defaced that one could not tell the time of day; and when it struck, it was with noticeably disproportionate deliberation, as if it wished to correct any mistake into which the family might have fallen by reason of its illegible dial.

The paper on the walls showed the first concession of the Puritans to the Spirit of Beauty, and was made up of a heterogeneous mixture of flowers of unheard of shapes and colors, arranged in four different ways along the wall.

¹From *Main Travelled Roads*: Up the Coulé, cop. 1883, 1899, by Hamlin Garland.

There were no books, no music, and only a few newspapers in sight—a bare, blank, cold, drab-colored shelter from the rain, not a home. Nothing cosy, nothing heart-warming; a grim and horrible shed.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY¹

WASHINGTON IRVING

ON one of those sober and rather melancholy days in the latter part of autumn when the shadows of morning and evening almost mingle together, and throw a gloom over the decline of the year, I passed several hours in rambling about Westminster Abbey. There was something congenial to the season in the mournful magnificence of the old pile, and as I passed its threshold it seemed like stepping back into the regions of antiquity and losing myself among the shades of former ages.

I entered from the inner court of Westminster School, through a long, low, vaulted passage that had an almost subterranean look, being dimly lighted in one part by circular perforations in the massive walls. Through this dark avenue I had a distant view of the cloisters, with the figure of an old verger in his black gown moving along their shadowy vaults, and seeming like a spectre from one of the neighboring tombs. The approach to the abbey through these gloomy monastic remains prepares the mind for its solemn contemplation. The cloisters still retain something of the quiet and seclusion of former days. The gray walls are discolored by damps and crumbling with age; a coat of hoary moss has gathered over the inscriptions of the mural monuments, and obscured the death's heads and other funeral emblems. The sharp

¹ From The Sketch Book. By permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

touches of the chisel are gone from the rich tracery of the arches; the roses which adorned the key-stones have lost their leafy beauty; everything bears marks of the gradual dilapidations of time, which yet has something touching and pleasing in its very decay.

The sun was pouring down a yellow, autumnal ray into the square of the cloisters, beaming upon a scanty plot of grass in the centre, and lighting up an angle of the vaulted passage with a kind of dusky splendor. From between the arcades the eye glanced up to a bit of blue sky or a passing cloud, and beheld the sun-gilt pinnacles of the abbey towering into the azure heaven.

As I paced the cloister, sometimes contemplating this mingled picture of glory and decay, and sometimes endeavoring to decipher the inscriptions on the tombstones which formed the pavement beneath my feet, my eye was attracted to three figures rudely carved in relief, but nearly worn away by the footsteps of many generations. They were the effigies of three of the early abbots; the epitaphs were entirely effaced; the names alone remained, having no doubt been renewed in later times (Vitalis. Abbas. 1082, and Gislebertus Crispinus. Abbas. 1114, and Laurentius. Abbas. 1176). I remained some little while, musing over these casual relics of antiquity thus left like wrecks upon this distant shore of time, telling no tale but that such beings had been and had perished, teaching no moral but the futility of that pride which hopes still to exact homage in its ashes and to live in an inscription. A little longer, and even these faint records will be obliterated and the monument will cease to be a memorial. Whilst I was yet looking down upon these gravestones I was roused by the sound of the abbey clock, reverberating from buttress to buttress and echoing among the cloisters. It is almost startling to hear this warning of departed time sounding among the tombs and

telling the lapse of the hour, which, like a billow, has rolled us onward towards the grave. I pursued my walk to an arched door opening to the interior of the abbey. On entering here the magnitude of the building breaks fully upon the mind, contrasted with the vaults of the cloisters. The eyes gaze with wonder at clustered columns of gigantic dimensions, with arches springing from them to such an amazing height, and man wandering about their bases shrunk into insignificance in comparison with his own handiwork. The spaciousness and gloom of this vast edifice produce a profound and mysterious awe. We step cautiously and softly about, as if fearful of disturbing the hallowed silence of the tomb, while every footfall whispers along the walls and chatters among the sepulchres, making us more sensible of the quiet we have interrupted.

It seems as if the awful nature of the place presses down upon the soul and hushes the beholder into noiseless reverence. We feel that we are surrounded by the congregated bones of the great men of past times, who have filled history with their deeds and the earth with their renown.

And yet it almost provokes a smile at the vanity of human ambition to see how they are crowded together and jostled in the dust; what parsimony is observed in doling out a scanty nook, a gloomy corner, a little portion of earth, to those whom, when alive, kingdoms could not satisfy, and how many shapes and forms and artifices are devised to catch the casual notice of the passenger, and save from forgetfulness for a few short years a name which once aspired to occupy ages of the world's thought and admiration.

I passed some time in Poet's Corner, which occupies an end of one of the transepts or cross aisles of the abbey. The monuments are generally simple, for the lives of

literary men afford no striking themes for the sculptor. Shakespeare and Addison have statues erected to their memories, but the greater part have busts, medallions, and sometimes mere inscriptions. Notwithstanding the simplicity of these memorials, I have always observed that the visitors to the abbey remained longest about them. A kinder and fonder feeling takes place of that old curiosity or vague admiration with which they gaze on the splendid monuments of the great and the heroic. They linger about these as about the tombs of friends and companions, for indeed there is something of companionship between the author and the reader. Other men are known to posterity only through the medium of history, which is continually growing faint and obscure; but the intercourse between the author and his fellow-men is ever new, active, and immediate. He has lived for them more than for himself; he has sacrificed surrounding enjoyments, and shut himself up from the delights of social life, that he might the more intimately commune with distant minds and distant ages. Well may the world cherish his renown, for it has been purchased not by deeds of violence and blood, but by the diligent dispensation of pleasure. Well may posterity be grateful to his memory, for he has left it an inheritance not of empty names and sounding actions, but whole treasures of wisdom, bright gems of thought, and golden veins of language.

From Poet's Corner I continued my stroll towards that part of the Abbey which contains the sepulchres of the kings. I wandered among what once were chapels, but which are now occupied by the tombs and monuments of the great. At every turn I met with some illustrious name or the cognizance of some powerful house renowned in history. As the eye darts into these dusky chambers of death it catches glimpses of quaint effigies—some kneeling in niches, as if in devotion; others stretched upon the

tombs, with hands piously pressed together; warriors in armor, as if reposing after battle; prelates, with crosiers and mitres; and nobles in robes and coronets, lying as it were in state. In glancing over this scene, so strangely populous, yet where every form is so still and silent, it seems almost as if we were treading a mansion of that fabled city where every being had been suddenly transmuted into stone.

I paused to contemplate a tomb on which lay the effigy of a knight in complete armor. A large buckler was on one arm; the hands were pressed together in supplication upon the breast; the face was almost covered by the morion; the legs were crossed, in token of the warrior's having been engaged in the holy war. It was the tomb of a crusader, of one of those military enthusiasts who so strangely mingled religion and romance, and whose exploits form the connecting link between fact and fiction, between the history and the fairy-tale. There is something extremely picturesque in the tombs of these adventurers, decorated as they are with rude armorial bearing and Gothic sculpture. They comport with the antiquated chapels in which they are generally found; and in considering them the imagination is apt to kindle with the legendary associations, the romantic fiction, the chivalrous pomp and pageantry which poetry has spread over the wars for the sepulchre of Christ. They are the relics of times utterly gone by, of beings passed from recollection, of customs and manners with which ours have no affinity. They are like objects from some strange and distant land of which we have no certain knowledge, and about which all our conceptions are vague and visionary. There is something extremely solemn and awful in those effigies on Gothic tombs, extended as if in the sleep of death or in the supplication of the dying hour. They have an effect infinitely more impressive on my feelings

than the fanciful attitudes, the over-wrought conceits, the allegorical groups which abound on modern monuments. I have been struck, also, with the superiority of many of the old sepulchral inscriptions. There was a noble way in former times of saying things simply, and yet saying them proudly; and I do not know an epitaph that breathes a loftier consciousness of family worth and honorable lineage than one which affirms that "all the brothers were brave and all the sisters virtuous."

While wandering about these gloomy vaults and silent aisles, studying the records of the dead, the sound of busy existence from without occasionally reaches the ear—the rumbling of the passing equipage, the murmur of the multitude, or perhaps the light laugh of pleasure. The contrast is striking with the deathlike repose around; and it has a strange effect upon the feelings thus to hear the surges of active life hurrying along and beating against the very walls of the sepulchre.

I continued in this way to move from tomb to tomb and from chapel to chapel. The day was gradually wearing away; the distant tread of loiterers about the abbey grew less and less frequent; the sweet-tongued bell was summoning to evening prayers; and I saw at a distance the choristers in their white surplices crossing the aisle and entering the choir. I stood before the entrance to Henry the Seventh's chapel. A flight of stairs leads up to it through a deep and gloomy but magnificent arch. Great gates of brass, richly and delicately wrought, turn heavily upon their hinges, as if proudly reluctant to admit the feet of common mortals into this most gorgeous of sepulchres.

On entering, the eye is astonished by the pomp of architecture and the elaborate beauty of sculptured detail. The very walls are wrought into universal ornament

encrusted with tracery, and scooped into niches crowded with the statues of saints and martyrs. Stone seems, by the cunning labor of the chisel, to have been robbed of its weight and density, suspended aloft as if by magic, and the fretted roof achieved with the wonderful minuteness and airy security of a cobweb.

Along the sides of the chapel are the lofty stalls of the Knights of the Bath, richly carved of oak, though with the grotesque decorations of Gothic architecture. On the pinnacles of the stalls are affixed the helmets and crests of the knights, with their scarfs and swords; and above them are suspended their banners, emblazoned with armorial bearings, and contrasting the splendor of gold and purple and crimson with the cold gray fretwork of the roof. In the midst of this grand mausoleum stands the sepulchre of its founder—his effigy, with that of his queen, extended on a sumptuous tomb—and the whole surrounded by a superbly-wrought brazen railing.

There is a sad dreariness in this magnificence, this strange mixture of tombs and trophies, these emblems of living and aspiring ambition, close beside mementos which show the dust and oblivion in which all must sooner or later terminate. Nothing impresses the mind with a deeper feeling of loneliness than to tread the silent and deserted scene of former throng and pageant. On looking round on the vacant stalls of the knights and their esquires, and on the rows of dusty but gorgeous banners that were once borne before them, my imagination conjured up the scene when this hall was bright with the valor and beauty of the land, glittering with the splendor of jewelled rank and military array, alive with the tread of many feet and the hum of an admiring multitude. All had passed away; the silence of death had settled again upon the place, interrupted only by the casual chirping of birds, which had found their way into the chapel and built their

necks among its friezes and pendants—sure signs of solitariness and desertion.

When I read the names inscribed on the banners, they were those of men scattered far and wide about the world—some tossing upon distant seas; some under arms in distant lands; some mingling in the busy intrigues of courts and cabinets,—all seeking to deserve one more distinction in this mansion of shadowy honors—the melancholy reward of a monument.

Two small aisles on each side of this chapel present a touching instance of the equality of the grave, which brings down the oppressor to a level with the oppressed and mingles the dust of the bitterest enemies together. In one is the sepulchre of the haughty Elizabeth; in the other is that of her victim, the lovely and unfortunate Mary. Not an hour in the day but some ejaculation of pity is uttered over the fate of the latter, mingled with indignation at her oppressor. The walls of Elizabeth's sepulchre continually echo with the sighs of sympathy heaved at the grave of her rival.

A peculiar melancholy reigns over the aisle where Mary lies buried. The light struggles dimly through windows darkened by dust. The greater part of the place is in deep shadow, and the walls are stained and tinted by time and weather. A marble figure of Mary is stretched upon the tomb, round which is an iron railing, much corroded, bearing her national emblem—the thistle. I was weary with wandering, and sat down to rest myself by the monument, revolving in my mind the chequered and disastrous story of poor Mary.

The sound of casual footsteps had ceased from the abbey. I could only hear, now and then, the distant voice of the priest repeating the evening service and the faint responses of the choir; these paused for a time, and all was hushed. The stillness, the desertion, and obscurity

that were gradually prevailing around gave a deeper and more solemn interest to the place;

“For in the silent grave no conversation,
No joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers,
No careful father’s counsel—nothing’s heard,
For nothing is, but all oblivion,
Dust, and an endless darkness.”

Suddenly the notes of the deep-laboring organ burst upon the ear, falling with doubled and redoubled intensity, and rolling, as it were, huge billows of sound. How well do their volume and grandeur accord with this mighty building! With what pomp do they swell through its vast vaults, and breathe their awful harmony through these caves of death, and make the silent sepulchre vocal! And now they rise in triumphant acclamation, heaving higher and higher their accordant notes and piling sound on sound. And now they pause, and the soft voices of the choir break out into sweet gushes of melody; they soar aloft and warble along the roof, and seem to play about these lofty vaults like the pure airs of heaven. Again the pealing organ heaves its thrilling thunders, compressing air into music, and rolling it forth upon the soul. What long-drawn cadences! What solemn sweeping concords! It grows more and more dense and powerful; it fills the vast pile and seems to jar the very walls—the ear is stunned—the senses are overwhelmed. And now it is winding up in full jubilee—it is rising from earth to heaven; the very soul seems rapt away and floated upwards on the swelling tide of harmony!

I sat for some time lost in that kind of revery which a strain of music is apt sometimes to inspire: the shadows of evening were gradually thickening round me; the monuments began to cast deeper and deeper gloom; and the distant clock again gave token of the slowly waning day.

FEATHERED PECKSNIFFS¹

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

THE robins are not good solo singers, but their chorus, as, like primitive fire-worshippers, they hail the return of light and warmth to the world, is unrivalled. There are a hundred singing like one. They are noisy enough then, and sing, as poets should, with no afterthought. But when they come after cherries to the tree near my window, they muffle their voices, and their faint *pip, pip, pop!* sounds far away at the bottom of the garden, where they know I shall not suspect them of robbing the great black-walnut of its bitter-rinded store. They are feathered Pecksniffs, to be sure, but then how brightly their breasts, that look rather shabby in the sunlight, shine in a rainy day against the dark green of the fringe-tree! After they have pinched and shaken all the life out of an earth-worm, as Italian cooks pound all the spirit out of a steak, and then gulped him, they stand up in honest self-confidence, expand their red waistcoats with the virtuous air of a lobby member, and outface you with an eye that calmly challenges inquiry. "Do *I* look like a bird that knows the flavor of raw vermin? I throw myself upon a jury of my peers. Ask any robin if he ever ate anything less ascetic than the frugal berry of the juniper, and he will answer that his vow forbids him." Can such an open bosom cover such depravity? Alas, yes! I have no doubt his breast was redder at that very moment with the blood of my raspberries.

¹ From *My Garden Acquaintance*, pp. 202-203. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

COLERIDGE¹

THE good man, he was now getting old, toward sixty perhaps; and gave you the idea of a life that had been full of sufferings; a life heavy-laden, half-vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment. Brow and head were round, and of massive weight, but the face was flabby and irresolute. The deep eyes, of a light hazel, were as full of sorrow as of inspiration; confused pain looked mildly from them, as in a kind of mild astonishment. The whole figure and air, good and amiable otherwise, might be called flabby and irresolute; expressive of weakness under possibility of strength. He hung loosely on his limbs, with knees bent, and stooping attitude; in walking he rather shuffled than decisively stepped; and a lady once remarked, he never could fix which side of the garden walk would suit him best, but continually shifted, in corkscrew fashion, and kept trying both. A heavy-laden, high-aspiring and surely much-suffering man. His voice, naturally soft and good, had contracted itself into a plaintive snuffle and singsong; he spoke as if preaching,—you would have said, preaching earnestly and also hopelessly the weightiest things. I still recollect his “object” and “subject,” terms of continual recurrence in the Kantean province; and how he sang and snuffled them into “om-m-mject” and “sum-m-mject,” with a kind of solemn shake or quaver, as he rolled along. No talk, in his century or any other, could be more surprising.

¹ Carlyle, *Life of Sterling*, ch. viii.

A LITTLE SCHOOLMISTRESS¹

CHARLES DICKENS

THE schools were newly built, and there were so many like them all over the country that one might have thought the whole were but one restless edifice with the locomotive gift of Aladdin's palace. They were in a neighborhood which looked like a toy neighborhood taken in blocks out of a box by a child of particularly incoherent mind, and set up anyhow; here, one side of a new street; there, a large solitary public-house facing nowhere; here, another unfinished street already in ruins; there, a church; here, an immense new warehouse; there, a dilapidated old country villa; then, a medley of black ditch, sparkling cucumber-frame, rank field, cultivated kitchen garden, brick viaduct, arch-spanned canal, and disorder of frowziness and fog. As if the child had given the table a kick and gone to sleep.

But even among school buildings, school teachers, and school pupils, all according to pattern and all engendered in the light of the latest Gospel according to Monotony, the older pattern into which so many fortunes have been shaped for good and evil, comes out. It came out in Miss Peecher the schoolmistress, watering her flowers, as Mr. Bradley Headstone walked forth. It came out in Miss Peecher the schoolmistress, watering the flowers in the little dusty bit of garden attached to her small official residence, with little windows like the eyes in needles, and little doors like the covers of school books.

Small, shining, neat, methodical, and buxom was Miss Peecher, cherry-cheeked and tuneful of voice. A little pincushion, a little housewife, a little book, a little work-

¹ From *Our Mutual Friend*, Book 2, ch. 1.

box, a little set of tables and weights and measures, and a little woman, all in one. She could write a little essay on any subject, exactly a slate long, beginning at the left-hand top of one side and ending at the right-hand bottom of the other, and the essay should be strictly according to rule.

MRS. CRACKENTHORP¹

GEORGE ELIOT

MRS. CRACKENTHORP—a small blinking woman, who fidgeted incessantly with her lace, ribbons, and gold chain, turning her head about and making subdued noises, very much like a guinea-pig that twitches its nose and soliloquizes in all company indiscriminately—now blinked and fidgeted towards the Squire, and said. “Oh, no—no offence.”

ICHABOD CRANE AND HIS HORSE²

WASHINGTON IRVING

THE cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable to his person. He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weather-cock perched upon his spindle neck to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the

¹ From *Silas Marner*, ch. 11.

² From *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. By permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for the genius of Famine descending upon the earth or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield. . . .

The gallant Ichabod now spent at least an extra half hour at his toilet, brushing and furbishing up his best, and indeed only, suit of rusty black, and arranging his locks by a bit of broken looking-glass that hung up in the school-house. That he might make his appearance before his mistress in the true style of a cavalier, he borrowed a horse from the farmer with whom he was domiciliated, a choleric old Dutchman of the name of Hans Van Ripper, and, thus gallantly mounted, issued forth like a knight-errant in quest of adventures. But it is meet I should, in the true spirit of romantic story, give some account of the looks and equipment of my hero and his steed. The animal he bestrode was a broken down plough-horse that had outlived almost everything but his viciousness. He was gaunt and shagged, with a ewe neck and a head like a hammer; his rusty mane and tail were tangled and knotted with burrs; one eye had lost its pupil and was glaring and spectral, but the other had the gleam of a genuine devil in it. Still, he must have had fire and mettle in his day, if we may judge from the name he bore of Gunpowder. He had, in fact, been a favorite steed of his master's, the choleric Van Ripper, who was a furious rider, and had infused, very probably, some of his own spirit into the animal; for, old and broken down as he looked, there was more of the lurking devil in him than in any young filly in the country.

Ichabod was a suitable figure for such a steed. He rode with short stirrups, which brought his knees nearly up to the pommel of the saddle; his sharp elbows stuck out like grasshoppers'; he carried his whip perpendicularly in his hand like a sceptre; and as his horse jogged on, the

motion of his arms was not unlike the flapping of a pair of wings. A small wool hat rested on the top of his nose, for so his scanty strip of forehead might be called, and the skirts of his black coat fluttered out almost to his horse's tail. Such was the apparition of Ichabod and his steed as they shambled out of the gate of Hans Van Ripper, and it was altogether such an apparition as is seldom to be met with in broad daylight.

A VILLAGE PATRIARCH¹

WASHINGTON IRVING

THE opinions of this junto¹ were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun, and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true, he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent, and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds, and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

¹ From *Rip Van Winkle*. By permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

MISS GRISELDA OLDBUCK¹

SIR WALTER SCOTT

THE elderly lady rustled in silks and satins, and bore upon her head a structure resembling the fashion in the ladies' memorandum-book for the year 1770, a superb piece of architecture not much less than a modern Gothic castle, of which the curls might represent the turrets, the black pins the *cheveaux de frize*, and the lappets the banners.

The face which, like that of the ancient statues of Vesta, was thus crowned with towers, was large and long, and peaked at nose and chin, and bore in other respects such a ludicrous resemblance to the physiognomy of Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck that Lovel, had they not appeared at once, like Sebastian and Viola in the last scene of the "Twelfth Night," might have supposed that the figure before him was his old friend masquerading in female attire. An antique flowered silk gown graced the extraordinary person to whom belonged this unparalleled *tête*, which her brother was wont to say was fitter for a turban for Mahound or Termagant than a headgear for a reasonable creature or Christian gentlewoman. Two long and bony arms were terminated at the elbows by triple blond ruffles, and, being folded saltire-ways in front of her person, and decorated with long gloves of a bright vermilion color, presented no bad resemblance to a pair of gigantic lobsters. High-heeled shoes, and a short silk cloak, thrown in easy negligence over her shoulders, completed the exterior of Miss Griselda Oldbuck.

¹ From *The Antiquary*, ch. 6.

MY LADY VISCOUNTESS¹

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

My Lady Viscountess's face was daubed with white and red up to the eyes, to which the paint gave an unearthly glare; she had a tower of lace on her head, under which was a bush of black curls—borrowed curls—so that no wonder little Harry Esmond was scared when he was first presented to her—the kind priest acting as master of the ceremonies at that solemn introduction—and he stared at her with eyes almost as great as her own, as he had stared at the player-woman who acted the wicked tragedy-queen, when the players came down to Ealing Fair. She sate in a great chair by the fire-corner; in her lap was a spaniel dog that barked furiously; on a little table by her was her ladyship's snuff-box and her sugar-plum box. She wore a dress of black velvet, and a petticoat of flame-colored brocade. She had as many rings on her fingers as the old woman of Banbury Cross; and pretty small feet which she was fond of showing, with great gold clocks to her stockings, and white pantofles with red heels; and an odor of musk was shook out of her garments whenever she moved or quitted the room, leaning on her tortoise-shell stick, little Fury barking at her heels.

THE QUEEN OF DELHI'S VOICE²

RUDYARD KIPLING

FROM behind the shaking curtains came one volley of invective. It did not last long, but in kind and quality,

¹ From Henry Esmond, ch. 2.

² From Kim, p. 117. Copyright, 1900, by Rudyard Kipling. Used by permission.

in blistering, biting appropriateness it was beyond anything that even Kim had heard. He could see the carter's bare chest collapse with amazement, as the men salaamed reverently to the voice, leaped from the pole, and helped the escort to haul their volcano on the main road. . . . They could hear the old lady's tongue clacking as steadily as a rice-husker.

THE MINISTER'S VOICE¹

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

By this time the preliminary prayer had been offered in the meeting-house, and the accents of the Rev. Mr. Dimmesdale were heard commencing his discourse. An irresistible feeling kept Hester near the spot. As the sacred edifice was too much thronged to admit another auditor, she took up her position close beside the scaffold of the pillory. It was in sufficient proximity to bring the whole sermon to her ears, in the shape of an indistinct, but varied, murmur and flow of the minister's very peculiar voice.

This vocal organ was in itself a rich endowment; in-somuch that a listener, comprehending nothing of the language in which the preacher spoke, might still have been swayed to and fro by the mere tone and cadence. Like all other music, it breathed passion and pathos, and emotions high or tender, in a tongue native to the human heart, wherever educated. Muffled as the sound was by its passage through the church walls, Hester Prynne listened with such intentness, and sympathized so intimately, that the sermon had throughout a meaning for her, entirely apart from its indistinguishable words. These, perhaps, if more distinctly heard, might have been

¹ From *The Scarlet Letter*, ch. 22. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin Co.

only a grosser medium, and have clogged the spiritual sense. Now she caught the low undertone, as of the wind sinking down to repose itself; then ascended with it, as it rose through progressive gradations of sweetness and power, until its volume seemed to envelop her with an atmosphere of awe and solemn grandeur. And yet, majestic as the voice sometimes became, there was forever in it an essential character of plaintiveness—a loud or low expression of anguish—the whisper, or the shriek, as it might be conceived, of suffering humanity, that touched a sensibility in every bosom! At times this deep strain of pathos was all that could be heard, and scarcely heard, sighing amid a desolate silence. But even when the minister's voice grew high and commanding—when it gushed irrepressibly upward—when it assumed its utmost breadth and power, so overfilling the church as to burst its way through the solid walls and diffuse itself in the open air, —still, if the auditor listened intently, and for the purpose, he could detect the same cry of pain. What was it? The complaint of a human heart, sorrow-laden, perchance guilty, telling its secret, whether of guilt or sorrow, to the great heart of mankind; beseeching its sympathy or forgiveness—at every moment—in each accent—and never in vain! It was this profound and continual undertone that gave the clergyman his most appropriate power.

LA GIOCONDA¹

WALTER PATER

THE presence that thus rose so strangely beside the waters is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand

¹ From *The Renaissance*: Leonardo da Vinci, pp. 129 ff. By permission of The Macmillan Co.

years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come," and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies had passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the reverie of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern thought has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

THE FAUN OF PRAXITELES¹

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

THE Faun is the marble image of a young man, leaning his right arm on the trunk or stump of a tree; one hand hangs carelessly by his side; in the other he holds the fragment of a pipe, or some such sylvan instrument of music. His only garment—a lion's skin, with the claws upon his shoulder—falls half-way down his back, leaving the limbs and entire front of the figure nude. The form, thus displayed, is marvellously graceful, but has a fuller and more rounded outline, more flesh, and less of heroic muscle than the old sculptors were wont to assign to their types of masculine beauty. The character of the face corresponds with the figure; it is most agreeable in outline and feature, but rounded and somewhat voluptuously developed, especially about the throat and chin; the nose is almost straight, but very slightly curves inward, thereby acquiring an indescribable charm of geniality and humor. The mouth, with its full yet delicate lips, seems so nearly to smile outright, that it calls forth a responsive smile. The whole statue—unlike anything else that ever was wrought in that severe material of marble—conveys the idea of an amiable and sensual creature, easy, mirthful, apt for jollity, yet not incapable of being touched by pathos. It is impossible to gaze long at this stone image without conceiving a kindly sentiment towards it, as if its substance were warm to the touch, and imbued with actual life. It comes very close to some of our pleasantest sympathies.

Perhaps it is the very lack of moral severity, of any

¹ From *The Marble Faun*, ch. 1. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

high and heroic ingredient in the character of the Faun, that makes it so delightful an object to the human eye and to the frailty of the human heart. The being here represented is endowed with no principle of virtue, and would be incapable of comprehending such; but he would be true and honest by dint of his simplicity. We should expect from him no sacrifice or effort for an abstract cause; there is not an atom of martyr's stuff in all that softened marble; but he has a capacity for strong and warm attachment, and might act devotedly through its impulse, and even die for it at need. It is possible, too, that the Faun might be educated through the medium of his emotions, so that the coarser animal portion of his nature might eventually be thrown into the background, though never utterly expelled.

The animal nature, indeed, is a most essential part of the Faun's composition; for the characteristics of the brute creation meet and combine with those of humanity in this strange yet true and natural conception of antique poetry and art. Praxiteles has subtly diffused throughout his work that mute mystery which so hopelessly perplexes us whenever we attempt to gain an intellectual or sympathetic knowledge of the lower orders of creation. The riddle is indicated, however, only by two definite signs: these are the two ears of the Faun, which are leaf-shaped, terminating in little peaks, like those of some species of animals. Though not so seen in the marble, they are probably to be considered as clothed in fine, downy fur. In the coarser representations of this class of mythological creatures, there is another token of brute kindred,—a certain caudal appendage; which, if the Faun of Praxiteles must be supposed to possess it at all, is hidden by the lion's skin that forms his garment. The pointed and furry ears, therefore, are the sole indications of his wild, forest nature.

Only a sculptor of the finest imagination, the most delicate taste, the sweetest feeling, and the rarest artistic skill—in a word, a sculptor and a poet too—could have first dreamed of a Faun in this guise, and then have succeeded in imprisoning the sportive and frisky thing in marble. Neither man nor animal, and yet no monster, but a being in whom both races meet on friendly ground. The idea grows coarse as we handle it, and hardens in our grasp. But, if the spectator broods long over the statue, he will be conscious of its spell; all the pleasantness of sylvan life, all the genial and happy characteristics of creatures that dwell in woods and fields, will seem to be mingled and kneaded into one substance, along with the kindred qualities in the human soul. Trees, grass, flowers, woodland streamlets, cattle, deer, and unsophisticated man. The essence of all these was compressed long ago, and still exists, within that discolored marble surface of the Faun of Praxiteles.

And, after all, the idea may have been no dream, but rather a poet's reminiscence of a period when man's affinity with nature was more strict, and his fellowship with every living thing more intimate and dear.

A PORTRAIT OF DANTE¹

THOMAS CARLYLE

To me it is a most touching face; perhaps of all faces that I know, the most so. Lonely there, painted as on vacancy, with the simple laurel wound round it; the deathless sorrow and pain, the known victory which is also deathless;—significant of the whole history of Dante! I think it is the mournfulest face that ever was painted

¹ From *The Hero as Poet*.

from reality; an altogether tragic, heart-affecting face. There is in it, as foundation of it, the softness, tenderness, gentle affection as of a child; but all this is as if congealed into sharp contradiction, into abnegation, isolation, proud, hopeless pain. A soft ethereal soul looking out so stern, implacable, grim-trenchant, as from imprisonment of thick-ribbed ice! Withal it is a silent pain, too, a silent scornful one; the lip is curled in a kind of godlike disdain of the thing that is eating-out his heart,—as if it were withal a mean, insignificant thing, as if he whom it had power to torture and strangle were greater than it. The face of one wholly in protest, and lifelong unsundering battle against the world. Affection all converted into indignation: an implacable indignation; slow, equable, silent, like that of a god! The eye, too, it looks out as in a kind of *surprise*, a kind of inquiry, Why the world was of such a sort? This is Dante: so he looks, this “voice of ten silent centuries,” and sings us “his mystic unfathomable song.”

THE OLD TOWER OF CALAIS CHURCH¹

JOHN RUSKIN

I CANNOT find words to express the intense pleasure I have always in first finding myself, after some prolonged stay in England, at the foot of the old tower of Calais Church. The large neglect, the noble unsightliness of it; the record of its years written so visibly, yet without sign of weakness or decay; its stern wasteness and gloom, eaten away by the Channel winds, and overgrown with the bitter sea grasses; its slates and tiles all shaken and

¹ From *Modern Painters*, v. 4, part V, ch. 1. By permission of Longmans, Green, & Co.

rent, and yet not falling; its desert of brickwork full of bolts, and holes, and ugly fissures, and yet strong, like a bare brown rock; its carelessness of what anyone thinks or feels about it, putting forth no claim, having no beauty, nor desirableness, pride nor grace; yet neither asking for pity; not, as ruins are, useless and piteous, feebly or fondly garrulous of better days; but useful still, going through its own daily work,—as some old fisherman beaten gray by storm, yet drawing his daily nets; so it stands, with no complaint about its past youth, in blanched and meagre massiveness and serviceableness, gathering human souls together underneath it; the sound of its bells for prayer still rolling through its rents; and the gray peak of it seen far across the sea, principal of the three that rise above the waste of surfy sand and hillocked shore,—the lighthouse for life, and the belfry for labor, and this for patience and praise.

I cannot tell the half of the strange pleasures and thoughts that came about me at the sight of that old tower; for, in some sort, it is the epitome of all that makes the Continent of Europe interesting, as opposed to new countries; and, above all, it completely expresses that agedness in the midst of active life which binds the old and the new into harmony. We, in England, have our new street, our new inn, our green shaven lawn, and our piece of ruin emergent from it,—a mere *specimen* of the middle ages put on a bit of velvet carpet to be shown, which, but for its size, might as well be on the museum shelf at once, under cover. But, on the Continent, the links are unbroken between the past and the present, and in such use as they can serve for, the gray-headed wrecks are suffered to stay with men; while in unbroken line the generations of spared buildings are seen succeeding each in its place. And thus in its largeness, in its permitted evidence of slow decline, in its poverty, in its

absence of all pretence, of all show and care for outside aspect, that Calais tower has an infinite of symbolism in it, all the more striking because usually seen in contrast with English scenes expressive of feelings the exact reverse of these.

TURNER'S SLAVE SHIP¹

JOHN RUSKIN

BUT, I think, the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted, and, if so, the noblest certainly ever painted by man, is that of the Slave Ship, the chief Academy picture of the Exhibition of 1840. It is a sunset on the Atlantic after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low, broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges, the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendor which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley the tossing waves, by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided, lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under strength of the swell compels or permits them; leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted

¹ From *Modern Painters*, v. 1, part 2, sec. 5, ch. 3. By permission of Longmans, Green, & Co.

with green and lamp-like fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet, and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labors amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight,—and cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.

DESCRIPTIVE TECHNIQUE

BYZANTIUM¹

EDWARD GIBBON

IF we survey Byzantium in the extent which it acquired with the august name of Constantinople, the figure of the Imperial City may be represented under that of an unequal triangle. The obtuse point, which advances toward the east and the shores of Asia, meets and repels the waves of the Thracian Bosphorus. The northern side of the city is bounded by the harbor; and the southern is washed by the Propontis, or Sea of Marmora. The basis of the triangle is opposed to the west, and terminates the continent of Europe. But the admirable form and division of the circumjacent land and water cannot, without a more ample explanation, be clearly or sufficiently understood.

The winding channel through which the waters of the Euxine flow with a rapid and incessant course towards the Mediterranean, received the appellation of Bosphorus, a name not less celebrated in the history, than in the fables, of antiquity. . . . The straits of the Bosphorus are terminated by the Cyanean rocks, which, according to the description of the poets, had once floated on the face of the waters; and were destined by the gods to protect the entrance of the Euxine against the eye of profane curiosity. From the Cyanean rocks to the point and harbor of Byzantium, the winding length of the Bos-

¹ From *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, v. 2, ch. 17

phorus extends about sixteen miles, and its most ordinary breadth may be computed at about one mile and a half. . . . The Bosphorus, as it begins to open into the Propontis, passes between Byzantium and Chalcedon. . . .

The harbor of Constantinople, which may be considered as an arm of the Bosphorus, obtained, in a very remote period, the denomination of the *Golden Horn*. The curve which it describes might be compared to the horn of a stag, or as it should seem with more propriety, to that of an ox. The epithet of *golden* was expressive of the riches which every wind wafted from the most distant countries into the secure and capacious port of Constantinople. The river Lycus, formed by the conflux of two little streams, pours into the harbor a perpetual supply of fresh water, which serves to cleanse the bottom, and to invite the periodical shoals of fish to seek their retreat in that convenient recess. As the vicissitudes of tides are scarcely felt in those seas, the constant depth of the harbor allows goods to be landed on the quays without the assistance of boats; and it has been observed that in many places the largest vessels may rest their prows against the houses, while their sterns are floating in the water. From the mouth of the Lycus to that of the harbor this arm of the Bosphorus is more than seven miles in length. The entrance is about five hundred yards broad, and a strong chain could be occasionally drawn across it, to guard the port and city from the attack of a hostile navy. . . .

. . . Situated in the forty-first degree of latitude, the Imperial City commanded, from her seven hills, the opposite shores of Europe and Asia; the climate was healthful and temperate, the soil fertile, the harbor secure and capacious; and the approach on the side of the continent was of small extent and easy defence. . . .

During the siege of Byzantium, the conqueror had pitched his tent on the commanding eminence of the sec-

ond hill. To perpetuate the memory of his success, he chose the same advantageous position for the principal Forum; which appears to have been of a circular, or rather elliptical form. The two opposite entrances formed triumphal arches; the porticos which enclosed it on every side were filled with statues; and the centre of the Forum was occupied by a lofty column, of which a mutilated fragment is now degraded by the appellation of the *burnt pillar*. This column was erected on a pedestal of white marble twenty feet high; and was composed of ten pieces of porphyry, each of which measured about ten feet in height, and about thirty-three in circumference. On the summit of the pillar, above one hundred and twenty feet from the ground, stood the colossal statue of Apollo. It was of bronze, had been transported either from Athens or from a town of Phrygia, and was supposed to be the work of Phidias. The artist had represented the god of day, or, as it was afterwards interpreted, the emperor Constantine himself, with a sceptre in his right hand, the globe of the world in his left, and a crown of rays glittering on his head. The Circus, or Hippodrome, was a stately building about four hundred paces in length, and one hundred in breadth. The space between the two *metae* or goals was filled with statues and obelisks; and we may still remark a very singular fragment of antiquity: the bodies of three serpents, twisted into one pillar of brass. Their triple heads had once supported the golden tripod which, after the defeat of Xerxes, was consecrated in the temple of Delphi by the victorious Greeks. The beauty of the Hippodrome has been long since defaced by the rude hands of the Turkish conquerors; but, under the similar appellation of Atmeidan, it still serves as a place of exercise for their horses. From the throne, whence the emperor viewed the Circensian games, a winding staircase descended to the palace; a magnificent

edifice, which scarcely yielded to the residence of Rome itself, and which, together with the dependent courts, gardens, and porticos, covered a considerable extent of ground upon the banks of the Propontis between the Hippodrome and the church of Saint Sophia. We might likewise celebrate the baths, which still retained the name of Zeuxippus, after they had been enriched, by the munificence of Constantine, with lofty columns, various marbles, and above threescore statues of bronze. But we should deviate from the design of this history, if we attempted minutely to describe the different buildings or quarters of the city. It may be sufficient to observe, that whatever could adorn the dignity of a great capital, or contribute to the benefit or pleasure of its numerous inhabitants, was contained within the walls of Constantinople. A particular description, composed about a century after its foundation, enumerates a capitol or school of learning, a circus, two theatres, eight public and one hundred and fifty-three private baths, fifty-two porticos, five granaries, eight aqueducts or reservoirs of water, four spacious halls for the meetings of the senate or courts of justice, fourteen churches, fourteen palaces, and four thousand three hundred and eighty-eight houses which, for their size or beauty, deserved to be distinguished from the multitude of plebeian habitations.

SIGHTS FROM A STEEPLE¹

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

IN three parts of the visible circle whose centre is this spire I discern cultivated fields, villages, white country-seats, the waving lines of rivulets, little placid lakes, and

¹ From *Twice-told Tales*. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

here and there a rising ground that would fain be termed a hill. On the fourth side is the sea, stretching away toward a viewless boundary, blue and calm, except where the passing anger of a shadow flits across its surface and is gone. Hitherward a broad inlet penetrates far into the land; on the verge of the harbor formed by its extremity is a town, and over it am I, a watchman, all-heeding and unheeded. . . .

Yonder is a fair street extending north and south. The stately mansions are placed each on its carpet of verdant grass, and a long flight of steps descends from every door to the pavement. Ornamental trees—the broad-leaved horse-chestnut, the elm so lofty and bending, the graceful but infrequent willow, and others whereof I know not the names—grow thrivingly among brick and stone. The oblique rays of the sun are intercepted by these green citizens and by the houses, so that one side of the street is a shaded and pleasant walk. On its whole extent there is now but a single passenger, advancing from the upper end, and he, unless distance and the medium of a pocket spy-glass do him more than justice, is a fine young man of twenty. He saunters slowly forward, slapping his left hand with his folded gloves, bending his eyes upon the pavement, and sometimes raising them to throw a glance before him. Certainly he has a pensive air. Is he in doubt or in debt? Is he—if the question be allowable—in love? Does he strive to be melancholy and gentlemanlike, or is he merely overcome by the heat? But I bid him farewell for the present. The door of one of the houses—an aristocratic edifice with curtains of purple and gold waving from the windows—is now opened, and down the steps come two ladies swinging their parasols and lightly arrayed for a summer ramble. Both are young, both are pretty; but methinks the left-hand lass is the fairer of the twain, and though she be so serious at

this moment, I could swear that there is a treasure of gentle fun within her. They stand talking a little while upon the steps and finally proceed up the street. Meantime, as their faces are now turned from me, I may look elsewhere.

Upon that wharf and down the corresponding street is a busy contrast to the quiet scene which I have just noticed. Business evidently has its centre there, and many a man is wasting the summer afternoon in labor and anxiety, in losing riches or in gaining them, when he would be wiser to flee away to some pleasant country village or shaded lake in the forest or wild and cool sea-beach. I see vessels unloading at the wharf and precious merchandise strewn upon the ground abundantly as at the bottom of the sea—that market whence no goods return, and where there is no captain nor supercargo to render an account of sales. Here the clerks are diligent with their paper and pencils and sailors ply the block and tackle that hang over the hold, accompanying their toil with cries long-drawn and roughly melodious till the bales and puncheons ascend to upper air. At a little distance a group of gentlemen are assembled round the door of a warehouse. Grave seniors be they, and I would wager—if it were safe, in these times, to be responsible for anyone—that the least eminent among them might vie with old Vincentio, that incomparable trafficker of Pisa. I can even select the wealthiest of the company. It is the elderly personage in somewhat rusty black, with powdered hair, the superfluous whiteness of which is visible upon the cape of his coat. His twenty ships are wafted on some of their many courses by every breeze that blows, and his name, I will venture to say, though I know it not, is a familiar sound among the far-separated merchants of Europe and the Indies.

But I bestow too much attention in this quarter. On

looking again to the long and shady walk, I perceive that the two fair girls have encountered the young man. After a sort of shyness in the recognition, he turns back with them. Moreover, he has sanctioned my taste in regard to his companions by placing himself on the inner side of the pavement, nearest the Venus to whom I, enacting on a steeple-top the part of Paris on the top of Ida, adjudged the golden apple.

In two streets converging at right angles towards my watch-tower I distinguish three different processions. One is a proud array of voluntary soldiers in bright uniform, resembling, from the height whence I look down, the painted veterans that garrison the windows of a toy-shop. And yet it stirs my heart. Their regular advance, their nodding plumes, the sun-flash on their bayonets and musket-barrels, the roll of their drums ascending past me, and the fife ever and anon piercing through,—these things have wakened a warlike fire, peaceful though I be. Close to their rear marches a battalion of school-boys ranged in crooked and irregular platoons, shouldering sticks, thumping a harsh and unripe clatter from an instrument of tin and ridiculously aping the intricate manœuvres of the foremost band. Nevertheless, as slight differences are scarcely perceptible from a church-spire, one might be tempted to ask, "Which are the boys?" or, rather, "Which the men?" But, leaving these, let us turn to the third procession, which, though sadder in outward show, may excite identical reflections in the thoughtful mind. It is a funeral—a hearse drawn by a black and bony steed and covered by a dusty pall, two or three coaches rumbling over the stones, their drivers half asleep, a dozen couple of careless mourners in their every-day attire. Such was not the fashion of our fathers when they carried a friend to his grave. There is now no doleful clang of the bell to proclaim sorrow to

the town. Was the King of Terrors more awful in those days than in our own, that wisdom and philosophy have been able to produce this change? Not so. Here is a proof that he retains his proper majesty. The military men and the military boys are wheeling round the corner, and meet the funeral full in the face. Immediately the drum is silent, all but the tap that regulates each simultaneous footfall. The soldiers yield the path to the dusty hearse and unpretending train, and the children quit their ranks and cluster on the sidewalks with timorous and instinctive curiosity. The mourners enter the churchyard at the base of the steeple and pause by an open grave among the burial-stones; the lightning glimmers on them as they lower down the coffin, and the thunder rattles heavily while they throw the earth upon its lid. Verily, the shower is near, and I tremble for the young man and the girls, who have now disappeared from the long and shady street.

How various are the situations of the people covered by the roofs beneath me, and how diversified are the events at this moment befalling them! The new-born, the aged, the dying, the strong in life and the recent dead are in the chambers of these many mansions. The full of hope, the happy, the miserable and the desperate dwell together within the circle of my glance. In some of the houses over which my eyes roam so coldly guilt is entering into hearts that are still tenanted by a debased and trodden virtue; guilt is on the very edge of commission, and the impending deed might be averted; guilt is done, and the criminal wonders if it be irrevocable. There are broad thoughts struggling in my mind, and, were I able to give them distinctness, they would make their way in eloquence. Lo! the rain-drops are descending.

The clouds within a little time have gathered over all the sky, hanging heavily, as if about to drop in one un-

broken mass upon the earth. At intervals the lightning flashes from their brooding hearts, quivers, disappears, and then comes the thunder, travelling slowly after its twin-born flame. A strong wind has sprung up, howls through the darkened streets, and raises the dust in dense bodies to rebel against the approaching storm. The disbanded soldiers fly, the funeral has already vanished like its dead, and all people hurry homeward—all that have a home—while a few lounge by the corners or trudge on desperately at their leisure. In a narrow lane which communicates with the shady street I discern the rich old merchant putting himself to the top of his speed lest the rain should convert his hair-powder to a paste. Unhappy gentleman! By the slow vehemence and painful moderation wherewith he journeys, it is but too evident that Podagra has left its thrilling tenderness in his great toe. But yonder, at a far more rapid pace, come three others of my acquaintance, the two pretty girls and the young man unseasonably interrupted in their walk. Their footsteps are supported by the risen dust, the wind lends them its velocity, they fly like three sea-birds driven landward by the tempestuous breeze. The ladies would not thus rival Atalanta if they but knew that any one were at leisure to observe them. Ah! as they hasten onward, laughing in the angry face of nature, a sudden catastrophe has chanced. At the corner where the narrow lane enters into the street they come plump against the old merchant, whose tortoise-motion has just brought him to that point. He likes not the sweet encounter; the darkness of the whole air gathers speedily upon his visage, and there is a pause on both sides. Finally he thrusts aside the youth with little courtesy, seizes an arm of each of the two girls, and plods onward like a magician with a prize of captive fairies. All this is easy to be understood. How disconsolate the poor lover stands, regardless of the rain that

threatens an exceeding damage to his well-fashioned habiliments, till he catches a backward glance of mirth from a bright eye, and turns away with whatever comfort it conveys!

THE MAELSTRÖM¹

EDGAR ALLEN POE

WE had now reached the summit of the loftiest crag. For some minutes the old man seemed too much exhausted to speak.

"Not long ago," said he at length, "and I could have guided you on this route as well as the youngest of my sons; but, about three years past, there happened to me an event such as never happened before to mortal man—or at least such as no man ever survived to tell of—and the six hours of deadly terror which I then endured have broken me up body and soul. You suppose me a *very* old man—but I am not. It took less than a single day to change these hairs from a jetty black to white, to weaken my limbs, and to unstring my nerves, so that I tremble at the least exertion, and am frightened at a shadow. Do you know I can scarcely look over this little cliff without getting giddy?"

The "little cliff," upon whose edge he had so carelessly thrown himself down to rest that the weightier portion of his body hung over it, while he was only kept from falling by the tenure of his elbow on its extreme and slippery edge—this "little cliff" arose, a sheer unobstructed precipice of black shining rock, some fifteen or sixteen hundred feet from the world of crags beneath us. Nothing would have tempted me to within half a dozen yards of its brink. In truth so deeply was I excited by the

¹ From *A Descent Into the Maelström*. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

perilous position of my companion, that I fell at full length upon the ground, clung to the shrubs around me, and dared not even glance upward at the sky—while I struggled in vain to divest myself of the idea that the very foundations of the mountain were in danger from the fury of the winds. It was long before I could reason myself into sufficient courage to sit up and look out into the distance. . . .

I looked dizzily, and beheld a wide expanse of ocean, whose waters wore so inky a hue as to bring at once to my mind the Nubian geographer's account of the *Mare Tenebrarum*. A panorama more deplorably desolate no human imagination can conceive. To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, there lay outstretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horribly black and beetling cliff, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against it its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking forever. Just opposite the promontory upon whose apex we were placed, and at a distance of some five or six miles out at sea, there was visible a small, bleak-looking island; or, more properly, its position was discernible through the wilderness of surge in which it was enveloped. About two miles nearer the land arose another of smaller size, hideously craggy and barren, and encompassed at various intervals by a cluster of dark rocks.

The appearance of the ocean, in the space between the more distant island and the shore had something very unusual about it. Although, at the time, so strong a gale was blowing landward that a brig in the remote offing lay to under a double-reefed trysail, and constantly plunged her whole hull out of sight, still there was here nothing like a regular swell, but only a short, quick, angry cross-dashing of water in every direction—as well in the teeth of the

wind as otherwise. Of foam there was little except in the immediate vicinity of the rocks.

We had now been about ten minutes upon the top of Helseggen, to which we had ascended from the interior of Lofoden, so that we had caught no glimpse of the sea until it had burst upon us from the summit. As the old man spoke, I became aware of a loud and gradually increasing sound, like the moaning of a vast herd of buffaloes upon an American prairie; and at the same moment I perceived that what seamen term the *chopping* character of the ocean beneath us, was rapidly changing into a current which set out to the eastward. Even while I gazed, this current acquired a monstrous velocity. Each moment added to its speed—to its headlong impetuosity. In five minutes the whole sea, as far as Vurggh, was lashed into ungovernable fury; but it was between Moskoe and the coast that the main uproar held its sway. Here the vast bed of the waters, seamed and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels, burst suddenly into frenzied convulsion—heaving, boiling, hissing—gyrating in gigantic and innumerable vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes, except in precipitous descents.

In a few minutes more there came over the scene another radical alteration. The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools, one by one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen before. These streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. The edge of

the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, and jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily round and round with a swaying and sweltering motion, and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice, half shriek, half roar, such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven.

The mountain trembled to its very base, and the rock rocked. I threw myself upon my face, and clung to the scant herbage in an excess of nervous agitation.

"This," said I at length to the old man—"this can be nothing else than the great whirlpool of the Maelström."

. . . So far we had ridden the swells very cleverly; but presently a gigantic sea happened to take us right under the counter, and bore us with it as it rose—up—up—as if into the sky. I would not have believed that any wave could rise so high. And then down we came with a sweep, a slide, and a plunge, that made me feel sick and dizzy, as if I was falling from some lofty mountain-top in a dream. But while we were up I had thrown a quick glance around—and that one glance was all-sufficient. I saw our exact position in an instant. The Moskoe-Ström whirlpool was about a quarter of a mile dead ahead—but no more like the every-day Moskoe-Ström than the whirl as you now see it is like a mill-race. If I had not known where we were, and what we had to expect, I should not have recognized the place at all. As it was, I involuntarily closed my eyes in horror. The lids clenched themselves together as if in a spasm.

It could not have been more than two minutes afterwards until we suddenly felt the waves subside, and were

enveloped in foam. The boat made a sharp half turn to larboard, and then shot off in its new direction like a thunderbolt. At the same moment the roaring noise of the water was completely drowned in a kind of shrill shriek—such a sound as you might imagine given out by the water-pipes of many thousand steam vessels, letting off their steam all together. We were now in the belt of surf that always surrounds the whirl; and I thought, of course, that another moment would plunge us into the abyss—down which we could only see indistinctly on account of the amazing velocity with which we were borne along. The boat did not seem to sink into the water at all, but to skim like an air-bubble upon the surface of the surge. Her starboard side was next the whirl, and on the larboard arose the world of ocean we had left. It stood like a huge, writhing wall between us and the horizon.

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How often we made the circuit of the belt it is impossible to say. We careered round and round for perhaps an hour, flying rather than floating, getting gradually more and more into the middle of the surge, and then nearer and nearer to its horrible inner edge.

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As I felt the sickening sweep of the descent, I had instinctively tightened my hold upon the barrel, and closed my eyes. For some seconds I dared not open them—while I expected instant destruction, and wondered that I was not already in my death-struggles with the water. But moment after moment elapsed. I still lived. The sense of falling had ceased; and the motion of the vessel seemed much as it had been before, while in the belt of foam, with the exception that she now lay more along. I took courage and looked once again upon the scene.

Never shall I forget the sensations of awe, horror, and

admiration with which I gazed about me. The boat appeared to be hanging, as if by magic, midway down, upon the interior surface of a funnel vast in circumference, prodigious in depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony but for the bewildering rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from that circular rift amid the clouds, which I have already described, streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost recesses of the abyss.

At first I was too much confused to observe anything accurately. The general burst of terrific grandeur was all that I beheld. When I recovered myself a little, however, my gaze fell instinctively downward. In this direction I was able to obtain an unobstructed view, from the manner in which the smack hung on the inclined surface of the pool. She was quite upon an even keel—that is to say, her deck lay in a plane parallel with that of the water—but this latter sloped at an angle of more than forty-five degrees, so that we seemed to be lying upon our beam-ends. I could not help observing, nevertheless, that I had scarcely more difficulty in maintaining my hold and footing in this situation than if we had been upon a dead level; and this, I suppose, was owing to the speed at which we revolved.

The rays of the moon seemed to search the very bottom of the profound gulf; but still I could make out nothing distinctly, on account of a thick mist in which everything there was enveloped, and over which there hung a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Mussulmans say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity. This mist, or spray, was no doubt occasioned by the clashing of the great walls of the funnel, as they all met together at the bottom—but the yell that

went up to the heavens from out of that mist, I dare not attempt to describe.

Our first slide into the abyss itself, from the belt of foam above, had carried us to a great distance down the slope; but our farther descent was by no means proportionate. Round and round we swept—not with any uniform movement, but in dizzying swings and jerks, that sent us sometimes only a few hundred yards—sometimes nearly the complete circuit of the whirl. Our progress downward, at each revolution, was slow but very perceptible.

SKIES OF A DAY¹

JOHN RUSKIN

STAND upon the peak of some isolated mountain at day-break, when the night mists first rise from off the plains, and watch their white and lake-like fields as they float in level bays and winding gulfs about the islanded summits of the lower hills, untouched yet by more than dawn, colder and more quiet than a windless sea under the moon of midnight; watch them when the first sunbeam is sent upon the silver channels, how the foam of their undulating surface parts and passes away; and down under their depths the glittering city and green pasture lie like Atlantis, between the white paths of winding rivers; the flakes of light falling every moment faster and broader among the starry spires, as the wreathed surges break and vanish above them, and the confused crests and ridges of the dark hills shorten their gray shadows upon the plain. . . . Wait a little longer, and you shall see those scattered mists rallying in the ravines, and floating up

¹ From *Modern Painters*, v. 1, part 2, sec. 3, ch. 4. By permission of Longmans, Green, & Co.

towards you, along the winding valleys, till they couch in quiet masses, iridescent with the morning light, upon the broad breasts of the higher hills, whose leagues of massy undulation will melt back and back into that robe of material light, until they fade away, lost in its lustre, to appear again above, in the serene heaven, like a wild, bright, impossible dream, foundationless and inaccessible, their very bases vanishing in the unsubstantial and mocking blue of the deep lake below. . . . Wait yet a little longer, and you shall see those mists gather themselves into white towers, and stand like fortresses along the promontories, massy and motionless, only piled with every instant higher and higher into the sky, and casting longer shadows athwart the rocks; and out of the pale blue of the horizon you will see forming and advancing a troop of narrow, dark, pointed vapors, which will cover the sky, inch by inch, with their gray network, and take the light off the landscape with an eclipse which will stop the singing of the birds and the motions of the leaves together; and then you will see horizontal bars of black shadow forming under them, and lurid wreathes create themselves, you know not how, along the shoulders of the hills; you never see them form, but when you look back to a place which was clear an instant ago, there is a cloud on it, hanging by the precipices, as a hawk pauses over his prey. . . . And then you will hear the sudden rush of the awakened wind, and you will see those watch-towers of vapor swept away from their foundations, and waving curtains of opaque rain let down to the valleys, swinging from the burdened clouds in black, bending fringes, or pacing in pale columns along the lake level, grazing its surface into foam as they go. And then, as the sun sinks, you shall see the storm drift for an instant from off the hills, leaving their broad sides smoking, and loaded yet with snow-white, torn, steam-like rags of

capricious vapor, now gone, now gathered again; while the smouldering sun, seeming not far away, but burning like a red-hot ball beside you, and as if you could reach it, plunges through the rushing wind and rolling cloud with headlong fall, as if it meant to rise no more, dyeing all the air about it with blood. . . . And then you shall hear the fainting tempest die in the hollow of the night, and you shall see a green halo kindling on the summit of the eastern hills, brighter—brighter yet, till the large white circle of the slow moon is lifted up among the barred clouds, step by step, line by line; star after star she quenches, setting in their stead an army of pale, penetrable, fleecy wreaths in the heaven, to give light upon the earth, which move together, hand in hand, company by company, troop by troop, so measured in their unity of motion, that the whole heaven seems to roll with them, and the earth to reel under them. . . . And then wait yet for one hour, until the east again becomes purple, and the heaving mountains, rolling against it in darkness, like waves of a wild sea, are drowned one by one in the glory of its burning; watch the white glaciers blaze in their winding paths about the mountains, like mighty serpents with scales of fire; watch the columnar peaks of solitary snow, kindling downwards, chasm by chasm, each in itself a new morning; their long avalanches cast down in keen streams brighter than the lightning, sending each his tribute of driven snow, like altar-smoke, up to the heaven; the rose-light of their silent domes flushing that heaven about them and above them, piercing with purer light through its purple lines of lifted cloud, casting a new glory on every wreath as it passes by, until the whole heaven—one scarlet canopy—is interwoven with a roof of waving flame, and tossing, vault beyond vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angels; and then, when you can look no more for gladness, and when you are

bowed down with fear and love of the Maker and Doer of this, tell me who has best delivered this His message unto men!

THE PASSING OF THE CARAVANS¹

LEW WALLACE

THE year we write of belonged to a cycle when readers of the Koran and worshippers at Mecca were more numerous than now, if not more zealous and believing. And it was to witness the passing of this procession, so numerous, so motley, so strangely furnished, so uncontrolled except as it pleased, the Prince of India was seated at the door of his tent upon the hill. Long before the spectacle was sighted in the distance, its approach was announced by an overhanging pillar of cloud, not unlike that which went before the Israelites in their exodus through similar wastes. Shortly after the interview with the Emir, the Prince, looking under the pillar, saw a darkening line appear, not more at first than a thread stretched across a section of the east.

The apparition was without a break; nor might he have said it was in motion or of any depth. A sound came from the direction not unlike that of a sibilant wind. Presently out of the perspective, which reduced the many to one and all sizes to a level, the line developed into unequal divisions, with intervals between them; about the same time the noise became recognizable as the voices fiercely strained and inarticulate of an innumerable host of men. Then the divisions broke into groups, some larger than others; a little later individuals became dis-

¹ From *The Prince of India*, vol. 1, ch. 5. Copyright, 1893, by Harper & Brothers.

cernible; finally what had appeared a line resolved itself into a convulsing mass, without front, without wings, but of a depth immeasurable.

The pilgrims did not attempt to keep the road; having converted their march into a race, they spread right and left over the country, each seeking a near way; sometimes the object was attained, sometimes not; the end was a confusion beyond description. The very inequalities of the ground helped the confusion. A group was one moment visible on a height; then it vanished in a hollow. Now there were thousands on a level; then, as if sinking, they went down, down, and presently where they were there was only dust or a single individual.

Afterwhile, so wide was the inrolling tide, the field of vision overflowed, and the eye was driven to ranging from point to point, object to object. Then it was discernible that the mass was mixed of animals and men—here horses, there camels—some with riders, some without—all, the burdened as well as unburdened, straining forward under urgency of shriek and stick—forward for life—forward as if of the two “comforts,” Success¹ beckoned them in front, and Despair behind plied them with spears.

At length the eastern boundary of the Valley was reached. There one would suppose the foremost of the racers, the happy victors, would rest or, at their leisure, take of the many sites those they preferred; but no—the penalty attaching to the triumph was the danger of being run down by the thousands behind. In going on there was safety—and on they went.

To this time the spectacle had been a kind of panoramic generality; now the details came into view, and, accustomed as he was to marvels of pageantry, the Prince exclaimed: “These are not men, but devils fleeing from

¹ In the philosophy of the Arabs Success and Despair are treated as comforts.

the wrath of God!" and involuntarily he went nearer, down to the brink of the height. It seemed the land was being inundated with camels; not the patient brutes we are used to thinking of by that name, with which domestication means ill-treatment and suffering—the slow-going burden-bearers, always appealing to our sympathy because always apparently tired, hungry, sleepy, worn-out—always reeling on as if looking for quiet places in which to slip their loads of whatever kind, and lie down and die; but the camel aroused, enraged, frightened, panic-struck, rebellious, sending forth strange cries, and running with all its might—an army of camels hurling their gigantic hulks along at a rate little less than blind impetus. And they went, singly and in strings, and yonder a mass. The slower, and those turned to the right or left of the direct course, and all such as had hesitated upon coming to a descent, were speedily distanced or lost to sight; so the ensemble was constantly shifting. And then the rolling and tossing of the cargoes and packages on the backs of the animals, and the streaming out of curtains, scarfs, shawls, and loose draperies of every shape and color, lent touches of drollery and bright contrasts to the scene. One instant the spectator on the hill was disposed to laugh, then to admire, then to shiver at the immensity of a danger; over and over again amidst his quick variation of feeling, he repeated the exclamation: "These are not men, but devils fleeing from the wrath of God!"

THE LISTS AT ASHBY¹

WALTER SCOTT

THE scene was singularly romantic. On the verge of a wood, which approached to within a mile of the town of Ashby, was an extensive meadow of the finest and most

¹ From *Ivanhoe*, ch. 7, and ch. 12.

beautiful green turf, surrounded on one side by the forest, and fringed on the other by straggling oak-trees, some of which had grown to an immense size. The ground, as if fashioned on purpose for the martial display which was intended, sloped gradually down on all sides to a level bottom, which was inclosed for the lists with strong palisades, forming a space of a quarter of a mile in length, and about half as broad. The form of the inclosure was an oblong square, save that the corners were considerably rounded off, in order to afford more convenience for the spectators. The openings for the entry of the combatants were at the northern and southern extremities of the lists, accessible by strong wooden gates, each wide enough to admit two horsemen riding abreast. At each of these portals were stationed two heralds, attended by six trumpets, as many pursuivants, and a strong body of men-at-arms, for maintaining order, and ascertaining the quality of the knights who proposed to engage in this martial game.

On a platform beyond the southern entrance, formed by natural elevation of the ground, were pitched five magnificent pavilions, adorned with pennons of russet and black, the chosen colours of the five knights challengers. The cords of the tents were of the same colour. Before each pavilion was suspended the shield of the knight by whom it was occupied, and beside it stood his squire, quaintly disguised as a salvage or silvan man, or in some other fantastic dress, according to the taste of his master and the character he was pleased to assume during the game. . . . From the entrance into the lists a gently sloping passage, ten yards in breadth, led up to the platform on which the tents were pitched. It was strongly secured by a palisade on each side, as was the esplanade in front of the pavilions, and the whole was guarded by men-at-arms.

The northern access to the lists terminated in a similar entrance of thirty feet in breadth, at the extremity of which was a large inclosed space for such knights as might be disposed to enter the lists with the challengers, behind which were placed tents containing refreshments of every kind for their accommodation, with armourers, farriers, and other attendants, in readiness to give their services wherever they might be necessary.

The exterior of the lists was in part occupied by temporary galleries, spread with tapestries and carpets, and accommodated with cushions for the convenience of those ladies and nobles who were expected to attend the tournament. A narrow space betwixt these galleries and the lists gave accommodation for yeomanry and spectators of a better degree than the mere vulgar, and might be compared to the pit of a theatre. The promiscuous multitude arranged themselves upon large banks of turf prepared for the purpose, which, aided by the natural elevation of the ground, enabled them to overlook the galleries and obtain a fair view into the lists. Besides the accommodation which these stations afforded, many hundreds had perched themselves on the branches of the trees which surrounded the meadow; and even the steeple of a country church, at some distance, was crowded with spectators.

It only remains to notice respecting the general arrangement, that one gallery in the very centre of the eastern side of the lists, and consequently exactly opposite to the spot where the shock of combat was to take place, was raised higher than the others, more richly decorated, and graced by a sort of throne and canopy, on which the royal arms were emblazoned. Squires, pages, and yeomen in rich liveries waited around this place of honour, which was designed for Prince John and his attendants. Opposite to this gallery was another, elevated to the same height, on the western side of the lists; and more gayly, if less

sumptuously decorated than that designed for the Prince himself. A train of pages and of young maidens, the most beautiful who could be selected, gayly dressed in fancy habits of green and pink, surrounded a throne decorated in the same colours. Among pennons and flags bearing wounded hearts, bleeding hearts, bows and quivers, and all the commonplace emblems of the triumphs of Cupid, a blazoned inscription informed the spectators that this seat of honour was designed for *La Royne de la Beauté et des Amours*. But who was to represent the Queen of Beauty and of Love on the present occasion no one was prepared to guess.

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It was a goodly, and at the same time an anxious, sight to behold so many gallant champions, mounted bravely and armed richly, stand ready prepared for an encounter so formidable, seated on their war-saddles like so many pillars of iron, and awaiting the signal of encounter with the same ardour as their generous steeds, which, by neighing and pawing the ground, gave signal of their impatience.

As yet the knights held their long lances upright, their bright points glancing to the sun, and the streamers with which they were decorated fluttering over the plumage of the helmets. Thus they remained while the marshals of the field surveyed their ranks with the utmost exactness lest either party had more or fewer than the appointed number. The tale was found exactly complete. The marshals then withdrew from the lists, and William de Wyvil, with a voice of thunder, pronounced the signal words, "*Laissez aller!*" The trumpets sounded as he spoke; the spears of the champions were at once lowered and placed in the rests; the spurs were dashed into the flanks of the horses; and the two foremost ranks of either party rushed upon each other in full gallop, and met in the middle of the lists with a shock, the sound of which

was heard at a mile's distance. The rear rank of each party advanced at a slower pace to sustain the defeated, and follow up the success of the victors, of their party.

The consequences of the encounter were not instantly seen, for the dust raised by the trampling of so many steeds darkened the air, and it was a minute ere the anxious spectators could see the fate of the encounter. When the fight became visible, half the knights on each side were dismounted—some by the dexterity of their adversary's lance; some by the superior weight and strength of opponents, which had borne down both horse and man; some lay stretched on earth as if never more to rise; some had already gained their feet and were closing hand to hand with those of their antagonists who were in the same predicament; and several on both sides, who had received wounds by which they were disabled, were stopping their blood by their scarfs, and endeavouring to extricate themselves from the tumult. The mounted knights, whose lances had been almost all broken by the fury of the encounter, were now closely engaged with their swords, shouting their war-cries, and exchanging buffets, as if honour and life depended on the issue of the combat.

The tumult was presently increased by the advance of the second rank on either side, which, acting as a reserve, now rushed on to aid their companions. The followers of Brian de Bois-Guilbert shouted: "*Ha! Beau-seant! Beau-seant!*" "For the Temple! For the Temple!" The opposite party shouted in answer: "*Desdichado! Desdichado!*" which watchword they took from the motto upon their leader's shield.

The champions thus encountering each other with the utmost fury, and with alternate success, the tide of battle seemed to flow now toward the southern, now toward the northern, extremity of the lists, as the one or the other

party prevailed. Meantime the clang of the blows and the shouts of the combatants mixed fearfully with the sound of the trumpets, and drowned the groans of those who fell and lay rolling defenceless beneath the feet of the horses. The splendid armour of the combatants was now defaced with dust and blood, and gave way at every stroke of the sword and battle-axe. The gay plumage, shorn from the crests, drifted upon the breeze like snow-flakes. All that was beautiful and graceful in the martial array had disappeared, and what was now visible was only calculated to awake terror or compassion.

Yet such is the force of habit, that not only the vulgar spectators, who are naturally attracted by sights of horror, but even the ladies of distinction, who crowded the galleries, saw the conflict with a thrilling interest certainly, but without a wish to withdraw their eyes from a sight so terrible. Here and there, indeed, a fair cheek might turn pale, or a faint scream might be heard, as a lover, a brother, or a husband was struck from his horse. But, in general, the ladies around encouraged the combatants, not only by clapping their hands and waving their veils and kerchiefs, but even by exclaiming, "Brave lance! Good sword!" when any successful thrust or blow took place under their observation.

Such being the interest taken by the fair sex in this bloody game, that of the men is the more easily understood. It showed itself in loud acclamations upon every change of fortune, while all eyes were so riveted on the lists that the spectators themselves had dealt and received the blows which were there so freely bestowed. And between every pause was heard the voice of the heralds exclaiming, "Fight on, brave knights! Man dies, but glory lives. Fight on, brave knights! for bright eyes behold your deeds!"

METHODS OF DESCRIPTION APPLIED TO VARIOUS OBJECTS

ST. MARK'S¹

JOHN RUSKIN

AND now I wish that the reader, before I bring him into St. Mark's Place, would imagine himself for a little time in a quiet English cathedral town, and walk with me to the west front of its cathedral. Let us go together up the more retired street, at the end of which we can see the pinnacles of one of the towers, and then through the low gray gateway, with its battlemented top and small latticed window in the centre, into the inner private-looking road or close, where nothing goes in but the carts of the tradesmen who supply the bishop and the chapter, and where there are little shaven grass-plots, fenced in by neat rails, before old-fashioned groups of somewhat diminutive and excessively trim houses, with little oriel and bay windows jutting out here and there, and deep wooden cornices and eaves painted cream colour and white, and small porches to their doors in the shape of cockle-shells, or little, crooked, thick, indescribable wooden gables warped a little on one side; and so forward till we come to larger houses, also old-fashioned, but of red brick, and with gardens behind them, and fruit walls, which show here and there, among the nectarines, the vestiges of an old cloister arch or shaft; and looking in

¹ From *Stones of Venice*. By permission of Longmans, Green, & Co.

front on the cathedral square itself, laid out in rigid divisions of smooth grass and gravel walk, yet not uncheerful, especially on the sunny side, where the canon's children are walking with their nursery maids. And so, taking care not to tread on the grass, we will go along the straight walk to the west front, and there stand for a time, looking up at its deep-pointed arches and the dark places between their pillars where there were statues once, and where the fragments, here and there, of a stately figure are still left, which has in it the likeness of a king, perhaps indeed a king on earth, perhaps a saintly king long ago in heaven; and so higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall of rugged sculpture and confused arcades, shattered, and gray, and grisly with heads of dragons and mocking fiends, worn by the rain and swirling winds into yet unseemlier shape, and coloured on their stony scales by the deep russet-orange lichen, melancholy gold; and so, higher still, to the bleak towers, so far above that the eye loses itself among the bosses of their traceries, though they are rude and strong, and only sees, like a drift of eddying black points, now closing, now scattering, and now settling suddenly into invisible places among the bosses and flowers, the crowd of restless birds that fill the whole square with that strange clangour of theirs, so harsh and yet so soothing, like the cries of birds on a solitary coast between the cliffs and sea.

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. . . As we advance slowly, the vast tower of St. Mark's seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level field of chequered stones; and, on each side, the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken

walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture, and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

And well may they fall back, for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away;—a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory,—sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless net-work of buds and plumes; and, in the midst of it, the solemn forms of angels, sceptred, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones, jasper, and porphyry, and deep-green serpentine spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, “their bluest veins to kiss,”—the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand; their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs, all beginning and ending in the Cross; and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven, and the labours of men, each in its appointed season upon the

earth; and above these another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers,—a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark's lion, lifted on a blue field covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.

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. . . Let us enter the church itself. It is lost in still deeper twilight, to which the eye must be accustomed for some moments before the form of the building can be traced; and then there opens before us a vast cave, hewn out into the form of a cross, and divided into shadowy aisles by many pillars. Round the domes of its roof the light enters only through narrow apertures like large stars; and here and there a ray or two from some faraway casement wanders into the darkness, and casts a narrow phosphoric stream upon the waves of marble that heave and fall in a thousand colours along the floor. What else there is of light is from torches, or silver lamps, burning ceaselessly in the recesses of the chapels; the roof sheeted with gold, and the polished walls covered with alabaster, give back at every curve and angle some feeble gleaming to the flames; and the glories round the heads of the sculptured saints flash out upon us as we pass them, and sink again into the gloom. Under foot and over head, a continual succession of crowded imagery, one picture passing into another, as in a dream; forms beautiful and terrible mixed together; dragons and serpents, and ravening beasts of prey, and graceful birds that in the midst of them drink from running fountains and feed from vases of

crystal; the passions and the pleasures of human life symbolized together, and the mystery of its redemption; for the mazes of interwoven lines and changeful pictures lead always at last to the Cross, lifted and carved in every place and upon every stone; sometimes with the serpent of eternity wrapt round it, sometimes with doves beneath its arms, and sweet herbage growing forth from its feet; but conspicuous most of all on the great rood that crosses the church before the altar, raised in bright blazonry against the shadow of the apse. And although in the recesses of the aisles and chapels, when the mist of the incense hangs heavily, we may see continually a figure traced in faint lines upon their marble, a woman standing with her eyes raised to heaven, and the inscription above her, "Mother of God," she is not here the presiding deity. It is the Cross that is first seen, and always burning in the centre of the temple; and every dome and hollow of its roof has the figure of Christ in the utmost height of it, raised in power, or returning in judgment.

A CASTLE¹

SIR WALTER SCOTT

FROM the verge of the wood where young Durward halted with his companion, in order to take a view of this royal residence, extended, or rather arose, though by a very gentle elevation, an open esplanade, devoid of trees and bushes of every description, excepting one gigantic and half-withered old oak. This space was left open, according to the rules of fortification in all ages, in order that an enemy might not approach the walls under cover, or unobserved from the battlements, and beyond it arose the Castle itself.

¹ From *Quentin Durward*, ch. 3.

There were three external walls, battlemented and turreted from space to space, and at each angle the second enclosure rising higher than the first, and being built so as to command the exterior defence in case it was won by the enemy; and being again, in the same manner, itself commanded by the third and innermost barrier. Around the external wall, as the Frenchman informed his young companion (for, as they stood lower than the foundation of the wall, he could not see it), was sunk a ditch of about twenty feet in depth, supplied with water by a dam-head on the river Cher, or rather on one of its tributary branches. In front of the second enclosure, he said, there ran another fosse, and a third, both of the same unusual dimensions, was led between the second and the innermost enclosure. The verge, both of the outer and inner circuit of this triple moat, was strongly fenced with palisades of iron, serving the purpose of what are called *chevaux-de-frise* in modern fortification, the top of each pale being divided into a cluster of sharp spikes, which seemed to render any attempt to climb over an act of self-destruction.

From within the innermost enclosure arose the Castle itself, containing buildings of different periods, crowded around, and united with the ancient and grim-looking donjon-keep, which was older than any of them, and which rose, like a black Ethiopian giant, high into the air, while the absence of any windows larger than shot-holes, irregularly disposed for defence, gave the spectator the same unpleasant feeling which we experience on looking at a blind man. The other buildings seemed scarcely better adapted for the purposes of comfort, for the windows opened to an inner and enclosed courtyard; so that the whole external front looked much more like that of a prison than a palace. The reigning King had even increased this effect; for, desirous that the additions

which he himself had made to the fortifications should be of a character not easily distinguished from the original building (for, like many jealous persons, he loved not that his suspicions should be observed), the darkest-coloured brick and freestone were employed, and soot mingled with the lime, so as to give the whole Castle the same uniform tinge of extreme and rude antiquity.

The formidable place had but one entrance, at least Durward saw none along the spacious front, except where, in the centre of the first and outward boundary, arose two strong towers, the usual defences of a gateway; and he could observe their ordinary accompaniments, portcullis and drawbridge—of which the first was lowered, and the last raised. Similar entrance-towers were visible on the second and third bounding wall, but not in the same line with those on the outward circuit; because the passage did not cut right through the whole three enclosures at the same point, but, on the contrary, those who entered had to proceed nearly thirty yards betwixt the first and second wall, exposed, if their purpose were hostile, to missiles from both; and again, when the second boundary was passed, they must make a similar digression from the straight line, in order to attain the portal of the third and innermost enclosure; so that before gaining the outer court, which ran along the front of the building, two narrow and dangerous defiles were to be traversed under a flanking discharge of artillery, and three gates, defended in the strongest manner known to the age, were to be successively forced.

THE ANTIQUARY'S DEN¹

SIR WALTER SCOTT

It was a lofty room of middling size, obscurely lighted by high, narrow, latticed windows. One end was entirely occupied by book-shelves, greatly too limited in space for the number of volumes placed upon them, which were, therefore, drawn up in ranks of two or three files deep, while numberless others littered the floor and the tables, amid a chaos of maps, engravings, scraps of parchment, bundles of paper, pieces of old armor, swords, dirks, helmets, and Highland targets. Behind Mr. Oldbuck's seat (which was an ancient leathern-covered easy-chair, worn smooth by constant use) was a huge oaken cabinet, decorated at each corner with Dutch cherubs, having their little duck-wings displayed and great jolter-headed visages placed between them. The top of this cabinet was covered with busts and Roman lamps and *pateræ*, intermingled with one or two bronze figures. The walls of the apartment were partly clothed with grim old tapestry, representing the memorable story of Sir Gawaine's wedding, in which full justice was done to the ugliness of the Lothely Lady; although, to judge from his own looks, the gentle knight had less reason to be disgusted with the match on account of disparity of outward favor than the romancer has given us to understand. The rest of the room was panelled or wainscotted with black oak, against which hung two or three portraits in armor, being characters in Scottish history, favorites of Mr. Oldbuck, and as many in tie-wigs and laced coats, staring representatives of his own ancestors. A large old-fashioned oaken table was covered with a profusion of papers,

¹ From *The Antiquary*, ch. 3.

parchments, books, and nondescript trinkets and gew-gaws, which seemed to have little to recommend them besides rust and the antiquity which it indicates. In the midst of this wreck of ancient books and utensils, with a gravity equal to Marius among the ruins of Carthage, sat a large black cat, which to a superstitious eye might have represented the *genius loci*, the tutelar demon of the apartment. The floor, as well as the table and chairs, was overflowed by the same *mare magnum* of miscellaneous trumpery, where it would have been as impossible to find any individual article wanted as to put it to any use when discovered.

THE OLD BOAT¹

CHARLES DICKENS

"Yon's our house, Mas'r Davy!"

I looked in all directions, as far as I could stare over the wilderness, and away at the sea, and away at the river, but no house could I make out. There was a black barge, or some other kind of superannuated boat, not far off, high and dry on the ground, with an iron funnel sticking out of it for a chimney, and smoking very cosily; but nothing else in the way of a habitation that was visible to *me*.

"That's not it?" said I. "That ship-looking thing?"

"That's it, Mas'r Davy," returned Ham.

If it had been Aladdin's palace, roc's egg and all, I suppose I could not have been more charmed with the romantic idea of living in it. There was a delightful door cut in the side, and it was roofed in, and there were little windows in it; but the wonderful charm of it was, that it

¹ From David Copperfield, ch. 3.

was a real boat which had no doubt been upon the waters hundreds of times, and which had never been intended to be lived in, on dry land. This was the captivation of it to me. If it had ever been meant to be lived in, I might have thought it small, or inconvenient, or lonely; but never having been designed for any such use, it became a perfect abode.

It was beautifully clean inside, and as tidy as possible. There was a table, and a Dutch clock, and a chest of drawers, and on the chest of drawers there was a tea-tray with a painting on it of a lady with a parasol, taking a walk with a military-looking child who was trundling a hoop. The tray was kept from tumbling down by a Bible; and the tray, if it had tumbled down, would have smashed a quantity of cups and saucers and a teapot that were grouped around the book. On the walls there were some common coloured pictures, framed and glazed, of Scripture subjects; such as I have never seen since in the hands of pedlars, without seeing the whole interior of Peggotty's brother's house again, at one view. Abraham in red going down to sacrifice Isaac in blue, and Daniel in yellow cast into a den of green lions, were the most prominent of these. Over the little mantel-shelf was a picture of the *Sarah Jane* lugger, built at Sunderland, with a real little wooden stern stuck onto it; a work of art, combining composition with carpentry, which I considered to be one of the most enviable possessions that the world could afford. There were some hooks in the beams of the ceiling, the use of which I did not divine then; and some lockers and boxes and conveniences of that sort, which served for seats and eked out the chairs.

All this I saw in the first glance after I crossed the threshold—child-like, according to my theory—and then Peggotty opened a little door and showed me my bedroom. It was the completest and most desirable little bedroom

ever seen—in the stern of the vessel; with a little window, where the rudder used to go through; a little looking-glass, just the right height for me, nailed against the wall, and framed with oyster-shells; a little bed, which there was just room enough to get into; and a nosegay of seaweed in a blue mug on the table. The walls were white-washed as white as milk, and the patchwork counterpane made my eyes quite ache with its brightness. One thing I particularly noticed in this delightful house, was the smell of fish; which was so searching, that when I took out my pocket-handkerchief to wipe my nose, I found it smelt exactly the same as if it had wrapped up a lobster. On my imparting my discovery in confidence to Peggotty, she informed me that her brother dealt in lobsters, crabs, and crawfish; and I afterwards found that a heap of these creatures, in a state of wonderful conglomeration with one another, and never leaving off pinching whatever they laid hold of, were usually to be found in a little wooden out-house where the pots and kettles were kept.

ACROSS THE LOZÈRE¹

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THE track that I had followed in the evening soon died out, and I continued to follow over a bald turf ascent a row of stone pillars, such as had conducted me across the Goulet. It was already warm. I tied my jacket on the pack, and walked in my knitted waistcoat. Modestine herself was in light spirits, and broke of her own accord, for the first time in my experience, into a jolting trot that sent the oats swashing in the pocket of my coat. The

¹ From *Travels with a Donkey: The Country of the Camisards*. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

view, back upon the northern Gévandau, extended with every step; scarce a tree, scarce a house, appeared upon the fields of wild hill that ran north, east, and west, all blue and gold in the haze and sunlight of the morning. A multitude of little birds kept sweeping and twittering about my path; they perched on the stone pillars, they pecked and strutted on the turf, and I saw them circle in volleys in the blue air, and show, from time to time, translucent flickering wings between the sun and me.

Almost from the first moment of my march, a faint large noise, like a distant surf, had filled my ears. Sometimes I was tempted to think it the voice of a neighbouring waterfall, and sometimes a subjective result of the utter stillness of the hill. But as I continued to advance, the noise increased and became like the hissing of an enormous tea-urn, and at the same time breaths of cool air began to reach me from the direction of the summit. At length I understood. It was blowing stiffly from the south upon the other slope of the Lozère, and every step that I took I was drawing nearer to the wind.

Although it had been long desired, it was quite unexpectedly at last that my eyes rose above the summit. A step that seemed no way more decisive than many other steps that had preceded it—and, “like stout Cortez when, with eagle eyes, he stared on the Pacific,” I took possession in my own name of a new quarter of the world. For behold, instead of the gross turf rampart, I had been mounting for so long, a view into the hazy air of heaven, and a land of intricate blue hills below my feet.

Just on the brow of the hill, where I paused to look before me, the series of stone pillars came abruptly to an end; and only a little below, a sort of track appeared and began to go down a break-neck slope, turning like a corkscrew as it went. It led into a valley between falling hills,

stubbly with rocks like a reaped field of corn, and floored further down with green meadows. I followed the track with precipitation; the steepness of the slope, the continuous agile turning of the descent, and the old unwearied hope of finding something new in a new country, all conspired to lend me wings. Yet a little lower and a stream began, collecting itself together out of many fountains, and soon making a glad noise among the hills. Sometimes it would cross the track in a bit of waterfall, with a pool, in which Modestine refreshed her feet.

The whole descent is like a dream to me, so rapidly was it accomplished. I had scarcely left the summit ere the valley had closed round my path, and the sun beat upon me walking in a stagnant lowland atmosphere. The track became a road, and went up and down in easy undulations. I passed cabin after cabin, but all seemed deserted; and I saw not a human creature, nor heard any sound except that of the stream. I was, however, in a different country from the day before. The stony skeleton of the world was here vigorously displayed to sun and air. The slopes were steep and changeful. Oak-trees clung along the hills, well-grown, wealthy in leaf, and touched by the autumn with strong and luminous colours. Here and there another stream would fall in from the right or the left, down a gorge of snow-white and tumultuary boulders. The river in the bottom (for it was rapidly growing a river, collecting on all hands as it trotted on its way) here foamed awhile in desperate rapids, and there lay in pools of the most enchanting sea-green shot with watery browns. As far as I have gone, I have never seen a river of so changeful and delicate a hue; crystal was not more clear, the meadows were not by half so green; and at every pool I saw I felt a thrill of longing to be out of these hot, dusty, and material garments, and bathe my naked body in the mountain air and water.

All the time as I went on I never forgot it was the Sabbath; the stillness was a perpetual reminder; and I heard in spirit the church-bells clamouring all over Europe, and the psalms of a thousand churches.

At length a human sound struck upon my ear—a cry strangely modulated between pathos and derision; and looking across the valley, I saw a little urchin sitting in a meadow, with his hands about his knees, and dwarfed to almost comical smallness by the distance. But the rogue had picked me out as I went down the road, from oak-wood on to oak-wood, driving Modestine; and he made me the compliments of the new country in this tremulous high-pitched salutation. And as all noises are lovely and natural at a sufficient distance, this also, coming through so much clean hill air and crossing all the green valley, sounded pleasant to my ear, and seemed a thing rustic, like the oaks or the river.

THE MOUNTAIN GLOOM¹

JOHN RUSKIN

I DO not know any district possessing more pure or uninterrupted fulness of mountain character (and that of the highest order), or which appears to have been less disturbed by foreign agencies, than that which borders the course of the Trient between Valorsine and Martigny. The paths which lead to it out of the valley of the Rhone, rising at first in steep circles among the walnut trees, like winding stairs among the pillars of a Gothic tower, retire over the shoulders of the hills into a valley almost unknown, but thickly inhabited by an industrious and

¹ From *Modern Painters*, part 5, ch. 19. By permission of Longmans, Green, & Co.

patient population. Along the ridges of the rocks, smoothed by old glaciers into long, dark, billowy swellings, like the backs of plunging dolphins, the peasant watches the slow coloring of the tufts of moss and roots of herb which, little by little, gather a feeble soil over the iron substance; then, supporting the narrow strip of clinging ground with a few stones, he subdues it to the spade; and in a year or two a little crest of corn is seen waving upon the rocky casque. The irregular meadows run in and out like inlets of lake among these harvested rocks, sweet with perpetual streamlets, that seem always to have chosen the steepest places to come down, for the sake of the leaps, scattering their handfuls of crystal this way and that, as the wind takes them, with all the grace, but with none of the formalism, of fountains; dividing into fanciful change of dash and spring, yet with the seal of their granite channels upon them, as the lightest play of human speech may bear the seal of past toil, and closing back out of their spray to lave the rigid angles, and brighten with silver fringes and glassy films each lower and lower step of sable stone; until at last, gathered all together again,—except, perhaps, some chance drops caught on the apple-blossom, where it has budded a little nearer the cascade than it did last spring,—they find their way down to the turf, and lose themselves in that silently; with quiet depth of clear water furrowing among the grass blades, and looking only like their shadow, but presently emerging again in little startled gushes and laughing hurries, as if they had remembered suddenly that the day was too short for them to get down the hill.

Green field, and glowing rock, and glancing streamlet, all slope together in the sunshine towards the brow of the ravines, where the pines take up their own dominion of saddened shade; and with everlasting roar in the twilight, the stronger torrents thunder down pale from the

glaciers, filling all their chasms with enchanted cold, beating themselves to pieces against the great rocks that they have themselves cast down, and forcing fierce way beneath their ghastly poise.

The mountain paths stoop to these glens in forky zigzags, leading to some gray and narrow arch, all fringed under its shuddering curve with the ferns that fear the light; a cross of rough-hewn pine, iron-bound to its parapet, standing dark against the lurid foam of the fury. Far up the glen, as we pause beside the cross, the sky is seen through the openings of the pines, thin with excess of light; and, in its clear, consuming flame of white space, the summits of the rocky mountains are gathered into solemn crowns and circlets, all flushed in that strange, faint silence of possession by the sunshine which has in it so deep a melancholy; full of power, yet as frail as shadows; lifeless, like the walls of a sepulchre, yet beautiful in tender fall of crimson folds, like the veil of some sea spirit, that lives and dies as the foam flashes; fixed on a perpetual throne, stern against all strength, lifted above all sorrow, and yet effaced and melted utterly into the air by that last sunbeam that has crossed to them from between the two golden clouds.

A POSTILION¹

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

HE was a comical-looking little fellow, already past the heyday of life, with a thin, sharp countenance, to which the smoke of tobacco and the fumes of wine had given the dusty look of parchment. He was equipped in a

¹ From *Outre-Mer: The Norman Diligence*. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

short jacket of purple velvet, set off with a red collar, and adorned with silken cord. Tight breeches of bright yellow leather arrayed his pipe-stem legs, which were swallowed up in a huge pair of wooden boots, iron-fastened, and armed with long, rattling spurs. His shirt-collar was of vast dimensions, and between it and the broad brim of his high, bell-crowned, varnished hat, projected an eel-skin queue, with a little tuft of frizzled hair, like a powder-puff, at the end, bobbing up and down with the motion of the rider, and scattering a white cloud around him.

LUDOVIC LESLY¹

SIR WALTER SCOTT

LUDOVIC LESLY, or, as we shall more frequently call him, *Le Balafré*, by which name he was generally known in France, was upwards of six feet high, robust, strongly compacted in person, and hard-favoured in countenance, which latter attribute was much increased by a large and ghastly scar, which, beginning on his forehead, and narrowly missing his right eye, had laid bare the cheek-bone, and descended from thence almost to the tip of his ear, exhibiting a deep seam, which was sometimes scarlet, sometimes purple, sometimes blue, and sometimes approaching to black; but always hideous, because at variance with the complexion of the face in whatever state it chanced to be, whether agitated or still, flushed with unusual passion, or in its ordinary state of weather-beaten and sunburnt swarthiness.

His dress and arms were splendid. He wore his national bonnet, crested with a tuft of feathers, and with a Virgin Mary of massive silver for a brooch. These brooches had

¹ From *Quentin Durward*, ch. 5.

been presented to the Scottish Guard, in consequence of the King, in one of his fits of superstitious piety, having devoted the swords of his guards to the service of the Holy Virgin, and, as some say, carried the matter so far as to draw out a commission to Our Lady as their Captain-General. The archer's gorget, arm-pieces, and gauntlets, were of the finest steel, curiously inlaid with silver, and his hauberk, or shirt of mail, was as clear and bright as the frost-work of a winter morning upon fern or briar. He wore a loose surcoat, or cassock, of rich blue velvet, open at the sides like that of a herald, with a large white St. Andrew's cross of embroidered silver bisecting it both before and behind—his knees and legs were protected by hose of mail and shoes of steel—a broad, strong poniard (called the Mercy of God) hung by his right side—the baldrick for his two-handed sword, richly embroidered, hung upon his left shoulder; but for convenience, he at present carried in his hand that unwieldy weapon, which the rules of his service forbade him to lay aside.

REBECCA¹

WALTER SCOTT

THE figure of Rebecca might indeed have compared with the proudest beauties of England, even though it had been judged by as shrewd a connoisseur as Prince John. Her form was exquisitely symmetrical, and was shown to advantage by a sort of Eastern dress, which she wore according to the fashion of the females of her nation. Her turban of yellow silk suited well with the darkness of her complexion. The brilliancy of her eyes, the superb arch of her eyebrows, her well-formed aquiline nose, her

¹ From *Ivanhoe*, ch. 7.

teeth as white as pearl, and the profusion of her sable tresses, which, each arranged in its own little spiral of twisted curls, fell down upon as much of a lovely neck and bosom as a simarre of the richest Persian silk, exhibiting flowers in their natural colours embossed upon a purple ground, permitted to be visible—all these constituted a combination of loveliness which yielded not to the most beautiful of the maidens who surrounded her. It is true, that of the golden and pearl-studded clasps which closed her vest from the throat to the waist, the three uppermost were left unfastened on account of the heat, which something enlarged the prospect to which we allude. A diamond necklace, with pendants of inestimable value, was by this means also made more conspicuous. The feather of an ostrich, fastened in her turban by an agraffe set with brilliants, was another distinction of the beautiful Jewess, scoffed and sneered at by the proud dames who sat above her, but secretly envied by those who affected to deride her.

ROWENA¹

WALTER SCOTT

FORMED in the best proportions of her sex, Rowena was tall in stature, yet not so much so as to attract observation on account of superior height. Her complexion was exquisitely fair, but the noble cast of her head and features prevented the insipidity which sometimes attaches to fair beauties. Her clear blue eye, which sate enshrined beneath a graceful eyebrow of brown, sufficiently marked to give expression to the forehead, seemed capable to kindle as well as melt, to command as well as to beseech.

¹ From *Ivanhoe*, ch. 4.

If mildness were the more natural expression of such a combination of features, it was plain that, in the present instance, the exercise of habitual superiority, and the reception of general homage, had given to the Saxon lady a loftier character, which mingled with and qualified that bestowed by nature. Her profuse hair, of a colour betwixt brown and flaxen, was arranged in a fanciful and graceful manner in numerous ringlets, to form which art had probably aided nature. These locks were braided with gems, and, being worn at full length, intimated the noble birth and freeborn condition of the maiden. A golden chain, to which was attached a small reliquary of the same metal, hung around her neck. She wore bracelets on her arms, which were bare. Her dress was an under-gown and kirtle of pale sea-green silk, over which hung a long loose robe, which reached to the ground, having very wide sleeves, which came down, however, very little below the elbow. This robe was crimson, and manufactured out of the very finest wool. A veil of silk, interwoven with gold, was attached to the upper part of it, which could be, at the wearer's pleasure, either drawn over the face and bosom after the Spanish fashion. or disposed as a sort of drapery round the shoulders.

DE LA MARCK¹

SIR WALTER SCOTT

At the head of the table sat, in the bishop's throne of state, which had been hastily brought thither from his great council-chamber, the redoubted Boar of Ardennes himself, well deserving that dreaded name, in which he affected to delight, and which he did as much as he could

¹ From *Quentin Durward*, ch. 22.

think of to deserve. His head was unhelmeted, but he wore the rest of his ponderous and bright armour, which indeed he rarely laid aside. Over his shoulders hung a strong surcoat, made of the dressed skin of a huge wild boar, the hoofs being of solid silver, and the tusks of the same. The skin of the head was so arranged that, drawn over the casque, when the Baron was armed, or over his bare head, in the fashion of a hood, as he often affected when the helmet was laid aside, and as he now wore it, the effect was that of a grinning ghastly monster; and yet the countenance which it overshadowed scarce required such horrors to improve those which were natural to its ordinary expression.

The upper part of De La Marck's face, as Nature had formed it, almost gave the lie to his character; for though his hair, when uncovered, resembled the rude and wild bristles of the hood he had drawn over it, yet an open, high, and manly forehead, broad, ruddy cheeks, large, sparkling, light-coloured eyes, and a nose that hooked like the beak of an eagle, promised something valiant and generous. But the effect of these more favorable traits was entirely overpowered by his habits of violence and insolence, which, joined to debauchery and intemperance, had stamped upon the features a character inconsistent with the rough gallantry which they would otherwise have exhibited. The former had, from habitual indulgence, swoln the muscles of the cheeks, and those around the eyes, in particular the latter; evil practices and habits had dimmed the eyes themselves, reddened that part of them that should have been white, and given the whole face a hideous likeness of the monster which it was the terrible Baron's pleasure to resemble. But from an odd sort of contradiction, De La Marck, while he assumed in other respects the appearance of the wild boar, and even seemed pleased with the name, yet endeavoured, by the

length and growth of his beard, to conceal the circumstance that had originally procured him that denomination. This was an unusual thickness and projection of the mouth and upper jaw, which, with the huge projecting side-piece, gave that resemblance to the bestial creation which, joined to the delight that De La Marck had in haunting the forest so-called, originally procured for him the name of the Boar of Ardennes. The beard, broad, grisly, and uncombed, neither concealed the natural horrors of the countenance, nor dignified its brutal expression.

A DINNER COMPANY¹

CHARLES DICKENS

THE great looking-glass above the sideboard reflects the table and the company. Reflects the new Veneering crest, in gold and eke in silver, frosted and also thawed, a camel of all work. The Herald's College found out a Crusading ancestor for Veneering who bore a camel on his shield (or might have done it if he had thought of it), and a caravan of camels take charge of the fruits and flowers and candles, and kneel down to be loaded with the salt. Reflects Veneering: forty, wavy-haired, dark, tending to corpulence, sly, mysterious, filmy—a kind of sufficiently well-looking veiled-prophet, not prophesying. Reflects Mrs. Veneering: fair, aquiline-nosed and fingered, not so much light hair as she might have, gorgeous in raiment and jewels, enthusiastic, propitiatory, conscious that a corner of her husband's veil is over herself. Reflects Podsnap: prosperously feeding, two little light-coloured wiry wings, one on either side of his else bald head, looking as like his hair brushes as his hair, dissolving

¹ From *Our Mutual Friend*, ch. 1.

view of red beads on his forehead, large allowance of crumpled shirt-collar up behind. Reflects Mrs. Podsnap: fine woman for Professor Owen, quantity of bone, neck, and nostrils like a rocking-horse, hard features, majestic head-dress in which Podsnap has hung golden offerings. Reflects Twemlow: gray, dry, polite, susceptible to east wind, First-Gentleman-in-Europe collar and cravat, cheeks drawn in as if he had made a great effort to retire into himself some years ago, and had got so far and had never got any farther. Reflects mature young lady: raven locks, and complexion that lights up well when well powdered—as it is—carrying on considerably in the captivation of mature young gentleman; with too much nose in his face, too much ginger in his whiskers, too much torso in his waistcoat, too much sparkle in his studs, his eyes, his buttons, his talk, and his teeth. Reflects charming old Lady Tippins on Veneering's right: with an immense obtuse drab oblong face, like a face in a table-spoon, and a dyed Long Walk up to the top of her head, as a convenient public approach to the bunch of false hair behind, pleased to patronize Mrs. Veneering opposite, who is pleased to be patronized. Reflects a certain "Mortimer," another of Veneering's oldest friends; who never was in the house before, and appears not to want to come again, who sits disconsolate on Mrs. Veneering's left, and who was inveigled by Lady Tippins (a friend of his boyhood) to come to these people's and talk, and who won't talk. Reflects Eugene, friend of Mortimer: buried alive in the back of his chair, behind a shoulder—with a powder-epaulette on it—of the mature young lady, and gloomily resorting to the champagne chalice whenever proffered by the Analytical Chemist. Lastly, the looking-glass reflects Boots and Brewer, and two other stuffed Buffers interposed between the rest of the company and possible accidents.

BEATRIX ESMOND¹

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

ESMOND found his little friend and pupil Beatrix grown to be taller than her mother, a slim and lovely young girl, with cheeks mantling with health and roses; with eyes like stars shining out of azure, with waving bronze hair clustered about the fairest young forehead ever seen; and a mien and shape haughty and beautiful, such as that of the famous antique statue of the Huntress Diana—at one time haughty, rapid, imperious, with eyes and arrows that dart and kill. Harry watched and wondered at this young creature, and likened her in his mind to Artemis with the ringing bow and shafts flashing death upon the children of Niobe; at another time she was coy and melting as Luna shining tenderly upon Endymion. This fair creature, this lustrous Phoebe, was only young as yet, nor had nearly reached her full splendour; but crescent and brilliant, our young gentleman of the University, his head full of poetical fancies, his heart perhaps throbbing with desires undefined, admired this rising young divinity; and gazed at her (though only as at some “bright particular star,” far above his earth) with endless delight and wonder. She had been a coquette from the earliest times almost, trying her freaks and jealousies, her wayward frolics, and winning caresses upon all that came within her reach; she set her women quarrelling in the nursery, and practised her eyes on the groom as she rode behind him on the pillion.

She was the darling and torment of father and mother. She intrigued with each secretly; and bestowed her fondness and withdrew it, plied them with tears, smiles, kisses,

¹ From *Henry Esmond*, bk. 1, ch. 12 and bk. 2, ch. 7.

cajolements;—when the mother was angry, as happened often, flew to her father, and sheltering behind him, pursued her victim; when both were displeased, transferred her caresses to the domestics, or watched until she could win back her parents' good graces, either by surprising them into laughter and good humour, or appeasing them by submission and artful humility.

This laughing colloquy took place in the hall of Walcote House; in the midst of which is a staircase that leads from an open gallery, where are the doors of the sleeping chambers; and from one of these, a wax candle in her hand, and illuminating her, came Mistress Beatrix—the light falling indeed upon the scarlet ribbon which she wore, and upon the most brilliant white neck in the world.

Esmond had left a child and found a woman, grown beyond the common height; and arrived at such a dazzling completeness of beauty, that his eyes might well show surprise and delight at beholding her. In hers there was a brightness so lustrous and melting, that I have seen a whole assembly follow her as if by an attraction irresistible; and that night the great Duke was at the playhouse after Ramillies, every soul turned and looked (she chanced to enter at the opposite side of the theatre at the same moment) at her, and not at him. She was a brown beauty; that is, her eyes, hair, and eyebrows and eyelashes were dark; her hair curling with rich undulations, and waving over her shoulders; but her complexion was as dazzling white as snow in sunshine; except her cheeks, which were a bright red, and her lips, which were of a still deeper crimson. Her mouth and chin, they said, were too large and full, and so they might be for a goddess in marble, but not for a woman whose eyes were fire, whose look was love, whose voice was the sweetest low song, whose shape

was perfect symmetry, health, decision, activity, whose foot as it planted itself on the ground was firm but flexible, and whose motion, whether rapid or slow, was always perfect grace—agile as a nymph, lofty as a queen—now melting, now imperious, now sarcastic, there was no single movement of hers but was beautiful. As he thinks of her, he who writes feels young again, and remembers a paragon.

So she came, holding her dress with one fair rounded arm, and her taper before her, tripping down the stair to greet Esmond.

ALAN BRECK¹

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

HE was smallish in stature, but well set and as nimble as a goat; his face was of a good open expression, but sunburnt very dark, and heavily freckled and pitted with the small-pox; his eyes were unusually light and had a kind of dancing madness in them, that was both engaging and alarming; and when he took off his great-coat, he laid a pair of fine silver-mounted pistols on the table, and I saw that he was belted with a great sword. His manners, besides, were elegant, and he pledged the captain handsomely. Altogether, I thought of him, at first sight, that here was a man I would rather call my friend than my enemy.

¹ From *Kidnapped*, ch. 9. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

QUEEN OF NIGHT¹

THOMAS HARDY

EUSTACIA VYE was the raw material of a divinity. On Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation. She had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman. Had it been possible for the earth and mankind to be entirely in her grasp for a while, had she handled the distaff, the spindle, and the shears at her own free-will, few in the world would have noticed the change of government. There would have been the same inequality of lot, the same heaping up of favours here, of contumely there, the same generosity before justice, the same perpetual dilemmas, the same captious alternation of caresses and blows that we endure now.

She was in person full-limbed and somewhat heavy; without ruddiness, as without pallor; and soft to the touch as a cloud. To see her hair was to fancy that a whole winter did not contain darkness enough to form its shadow; it closed over her forehead like nightfall extinguishing the western glow.

Her nerves extended into these tresses, and her temper could always be softened by stroking them down. When her hair was brushed she would instantly sink into stillness and look like the Sphinx. If, in passing under one of the Egdon banks, any of its thick skeins were caught, as they sometimes were, by a prickly tuft of the large *Ulex Europæus*—which will act as a sort of hair-brush—she would go back a few steps, and pass against it a second time.

She had Pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries. Their light, as it came and went, and came again, was partially

¹ From *The Return of the Native*, ch. 7. Harper & Brothers.

hampered by their oppressive lids and lashes; and of these the under lid was much fuller than it usually is with English women. This enabled her to indulge in revery without seeming to do so; she might have been believed capable of sleeping without closing them up. Assuming that the souls of men and women were visible essences, you could fancy the colour of Eustacia's soul to be flame-like. The sparks from it that rose into her dark pupils gave the same impression.

The mouth seemed formed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss. Some might have added, less to kiss than to curl. Viewed sideways, the closing-line of her lips formed, with almost geometric precision, the curve so well known in the arts of design as the *cima-recta*, or ogee. The sight of such a flexible bend on grim Egdon was quite an apparition. It was felt at once that that mouth did not come over from Sleswig with a band of Saxon pirates whose lips met like the two halves of a muffin. One had fancied that such lip-curves were mostly lurking underground in the South as fragments of forgotten marbles. So fine were the lines of her lips that, though full, each corner of her mouth was as clearly cut as the point of a spear. This keenness of corner was only blunted when she was given over to sudden fits of gloom, one of the phases of the night-side of sentiment which she knew too well for her years.

Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies, and tropical midnights; her moods recalled lotus-eaters and the march in "*Athalie*;" her motions, the ebb and flow of the sea; her voice, the viola. In the dim light, and with a slight rearrangement of her hair, her general figure might have stood for either of the higher female deities. The new moon behind her head, an old helmet upon it, a diadem of accidental dewdrops around her brow, would have been adjuncts sufficient to

strike the note of Artemis, Athena, or Hera respectively, with as close an approximation to the antique as that which passes muster on many respected canvasses.

But celestial imperiousness, love, wrath, and fervour had proved to be somewhat thrown away on netherward Egdon. Her power was limited, and the consciousness of this limitation had biassed her development. Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto. Her appearance accorded well with this smouldering rebelliousness, and the shady splendour of her beauty was the real surface of the sad and stifled warmth within her. A true Tartarean dignity sat upon her brow, and not factitiously or with marks of constraint, for it had grown in her with years.

Across the upper part of her head she wore a thin fillet of black velvet, restraining the luxuriance of her shady hair in a way which added much to this class of majesty by irregularly clouding her forehead. "Nothing can embellish a beautiful face more than a narrow band drawn over the brow," says Richter. Some of the neighbouring girls wore coloured ribbon for the same purpose, and sported metallic ornaments elsewhere; but if anyone suggested coloured ribbon and metallic ornaments to Eustacia Vye, she laughed and went on.

RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES¹

THOMAS CARLYLE

A most bland-smiling, semi-quizzical, affectionate, high-bred, Italianized little man, who has long olive-blond hair, a dimple, next to no chin, and flings his arm round your neck when he addresses you in public society!

¹ From *The Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*, v. 1, p. 289. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

ALFRED TENNYSON¹

THOMAS CARLYLE

ONE of the finest looking men in the world. A great shock of rough dusty-dark hair; bright-laughing hazel eyes; massive aquiline face; most massive yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic,—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet, in these late decades, such company over a pipe.

DANIEL WEBSTER²

THOMAS CARLYLE

NOT many days ago I saw at breakfast the notablist of all your Notabilities, Daniel Webster. He is a magnificent specimen; you might say to all the world, This is your Yankee Englishman, such Limbs we make in Yankeeland! As a Logic-fencer, Advocate, or Parliamentary Hercules, one would incline to back him at first sight against all the extant world. The tanned complexion, that amorphous crag-like face; the dull black eyes under their precipice of brows, like dull anthracite furnaces, needing only to be *blown*; the mastiff-mouth, accurately closed:—I have not traced as much of *silent Berserkir-rage*, that I remember of, in any other man.

¹ From The Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson, v. 2, page 66. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

² Ibid., v. 1, p. 260. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

THE PARSON¹

JAMES LANE ALLEN

A TALL, thinnish man, with silky pale-brown hair, worn long and put back behind his ears, the high tops of which bent forward a little under the weight, and thus took on the most remarkable air of paying incessant attention to everybody and everything; set far out in front of these ears, as though it did not wish to be disturbed by what was heard, a white, wind-splitting face, calm, beardless, and seeming never to have been cold, or to have dropped the kindly dew of perspiration; under the serene peak of this forehead a pair of large gray eyes, patient and dreamy, being habitually turned inward upon a mind toiling with hard abstractions; having within him a conscience burning always like a planet; a bachelor—being a logician; therefore sweet-tempered, never having sipped the sour cup of experience; gazing covertly at womankind from behind the delicate veil of unfamiliarity that lends enchantment; being a bachelor and a bookworm, therefore already old at forty, and a little run down in his toiles, a little frayed out at the elbows and the knees, a little seamy along the back, a little deficient at the heels; in pocket poor always, and always the poorer because of a spendthrift habit in the matter of secret charities; kneeling down by his small hard bed every morning and praying that during the day his logical faculty might discharge its function morally, and that his moral faculty might discharge its function logically, and that over all the operations of all his other faculties he might find heavenly grace to exercise both a logical and a moral control; at night kneeling down again to ask for—

¹ Flute and Violin, pp. 7–8. By permission of The Macmillan Co.

giveness that, despite his prayer of the morning, one or more of these same faculties—he knew and called them all familiarly by name, being a metaphysician—had gone wrong in a manner the most abnormal, shameless, and unforeseen; thus, on the whole, a man shy and dry; gentle, lovable; timid, resolute; forgetful, remorseful; eccentric, impulsive; thinking too well of every human creature but himself; an illogical logician, an erring moralist; a wool-gathered philosopher, but, humanly speaking, almost a perfect man.

A KENTUCKY GENTLEMAN¹

JAMES LANE ALLEN

ON the disappearing form of the colonel was fixed an ancient pair of eyes that looked out at him from behind a still more ancient pair of silver-rimmed spectacles with an expression of indescribable solicitude and love.

These eyes were set in the head of an old gentleman—for such he was—named Peter Cotton, who was the only one of the colonel's former slaves that had remained inseparable from his person and his altered fortune. In early manhood Peter had been a woodchopper; but he had one day had his leg broken by the limb of a falling tree, and afterwards, out of consideration for his limp, had been made supervisor of the wood-pile, and a sort of nondescript servitor of his master's luxurious needs.

Nay, in larger and deeper characters must his history be writ, he having been, in days gone by, one of those ministers of the gospel whom conscientious Kentucky masters often urged to the exercise of spiritual functions

¹ Two Gentlemen of Kentucky, pp. 104-107. By permission of The Macmillan Co.

in behalf of their benighted people. In course of preparation for this august work, Peter had learned to read and had come to possess a well-chosen library of three several volumes—*Webster's Spelling-Book*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *the Bible*. But even these unusual acquisitions he deemed not enough; for being touched with a spark of poetic fire from heaven, and fired by the African's fondness for all that is conspicuous in dress, he had conceived for himself the creation of a unique garment which should symbolize in perfection the claims and consolations of his apostolic office. This was nothing less than a sacred blue-jeans coat that he had had his old mistress make him, with very long and spacious tails, whereon, at his further direction, she embroidered sundry texts of Scripture which it pleased him to regard as the fit visible annunciations of his holy calling. And inasmuch as his mistress, who had had the coat woven on her own looms from the wool of her finest sheep, was, like other gentlewomen of her time, rarely skilled in the accomplishments of the needle, and was moreover in full sympathy with the piety of his intent, she wrought of these passages a border enriched with such intricate curves, marvellous flourishes, and harmonious letterings, that Solomon never reflected the glory in which Peter was arrayed whenever he put it on. For after much prayer that the Almighty wisdom would aid his reason in the difficult task of selecting the most appropriate texts, Peter had chosen seven—one for each day in the week—with such tact, and no doubt heavenly guidance, that when braided together they did truly constitute an eloquent epitome of Christian duty, hope, and pleading.

From first to last they were as follows: "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel;" "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh;" "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden;"

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin;" "Now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity;" "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep;" "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." This concatenation of texts Peter wished to have duly solemnized, and therefore, when the work was finished, he further requested his mistress to close the entire chain with the word "Amen," introduced in some suitable place.

But the only place now left vacant was one of a few square inches located just where the coat-tails hung over the end of Peter's spine; so that, when anyone stood full in Peter's rear, he could but marvel at the sight of so solemn a word emblazoned in so unusual a locality.

Panoplied in this robe of righteousness, and with a worn leather Bible in his hand, Peter used to go around of Sundays, and during the week, by night, preaching from cabin to cabin the gospel of his heavenly father.

The angriest lightnings of the sultriest² skies often played amid the darkness upon those sacred coat-tails and around that girdle of everlasting texts, as though the evil spirits of the air would fain have burned them and scattered their ashes on the roaring winds. The slow-shifting snows of winter whitened them as though to chill their spiritual fires; but winter and summer, year after year, in weariness of body, often in sore distress of mind, for miles along this lonely road and for miles across that rugged way, Peter trudged on and on, withal perhaps as meek a spirit as ever grew foot-sore in the paths of its Master. Many a poor over-burdened slave took fresh heart and strength from the sight of that celestial raiment; many a stubborn, rebellious spirit, whose flesh but lately quivered under the lash, was brought low by its humble teaching; many a worn-out old frame, racked with pain

in its last illness, pressed a fevered lip to its hopeful hem; and many a dying eye closed in death peacefully fixed on its immortal pledges.

A ROW OF PORTRAITS¹

JOHN GALSWORTHY

THE old man whose call in life was to warn the public against the dangers of the steam-roller held a small red flag in his remaining hand, for he had lost one arm. His brown face, through whose leathery skin white bristles showed, had a certain dignity; so had his square, upstanding figure. And his light gray eyes, with tiny pupils, gazed with a queer intentness, as if he saw beyond you. His clothes were old, respectable, and stained with grease; his smile shrewd and rather sweet, and his voice—of one who loved to talk, but whose profession kept him silent—was deliberate and sonorous, with a whistling lisp in it because he had not many teeth.

—*A Commentary*, p. 17.

The composure peculiar to the ashen type of the British aristocracy wintered permanently on Mrs. Winslow's features, like the smile of a frosty day. Expressionless to a degree, they at once convinced the spectator that she was a woman of the best breeding. Had an expression ever arisen upon these features it is impossible to say what might have been the consequences. She had followed her nurse's adjuration: "Lor! Miss Truda, never you make a face! You might grow so!" Never since that day had Gertrude Winslow, an Honourable in her own right

¹ By permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

and that of her husband—made a face, not even, it is believed, when her son was born.

—*The Country House*, p. 7.

And next him sat Mrs. Pendyce. A portrait of this lady hung over the sideboard at the end of the room, and though it had been painted by a fashionable painter, it had caught a gleam of that "something" still in her face these twenty years later. She was not young, her dark hair was going gray, but she was not old, for she had been married at nineteen and was still only fifty-two. Her face was rather long and very pale, and her eyebrows arched and dark and always slightly raised. Her eyes were dark gray, sometimes almost black, for the pupils dilated when she was moved; her lips were the least thing parted, and the expression of those lips and eyes was of a rather touching gentleness, of a rather touching expectancy. And yet all this was not the "something;" *that* was rather the outward sign of an inborn sense that she had no need to ask for things, of an instinctive faith that she already had them. By that "something," and by her long transparent hands, men could tell that she had been a Totteridge. And her voice, which was rather slow, with a little, not unpleasant trick of speech, and her eyelids by second nature just a trifle lowered, confirmed this impression. Over her bosom, which hid the heart of a lady, rose and fell a piece of wonderful old lace.

—*The Country House*, p. 14.

Lying in the porch was a little moonlight-coloured lady bull-dog, of toy breed, who gazed up with eyes like agates, delicately waving her bell-rope tail, as it was her habit to do towards every one, for she had been handed down clearer and paler with each generation, till she had lost all the peculiar virtues of dogs that bait the bull.

—*Fraternity*, p. 7.

His face was in mourning for a shave, his clothes were very ragged, and he was so thin that there seemed hardly any man behind those ragged clothes. He smelt, not indeed of whiskey, but as though bereaved of it; and his blue and watery eyes were like those of a lost dog.

—*A Commentary*, p. 19.

A girl in gray was standing there—thin, delicate, rather plain, with a nose ever so little to one side, lips faintly smiling, and large, shining, greenish eyes.

—*Fraternity*, p. 322.

She was resting a foot, very patient, very still, in an old brown skirt, an ill-shaped blouse, and a blue-green tam-o'-shanter cap. Hilary turned up the light. He saw a round little face with broad cheek-bones, flower-blue eyes, short lamp-black eyelashes, and slightly parted lips. It was difficult to judge of her figure in those old clothes, but she was neither short nor tall; her neck was white and well set on, her hair pale brown and abundant. Hilary noted that her chin, though not receding, was too soft and small; but what he noted chiefly was her look of patient expectancy, as though beyond the present she were seeing something, not necessarily pleasant, which had to come.

—*Fraternity*, p. 41.

He was quite a little man, with broad, high shoulders, and hardly any neck; and what was noticeable in his square, wooden-looking figure, dressed in light, shabby tweed, and patched, yellow boots, was that he seemed to have no chest. He was flat—from his white face, with its sandy hair, moustache, and eyebrows, under an old, narrow-brimmed straw hat, right down to his feet. It was as though life had planed him. His face, too, seemed to have lost all but its bones and skin of yellow-white;

there were no eyelashes to his reddish-brown round eyes; there was no colour in his thin lips, compressed as though to keep the secret of a mortal fear. Save for the wheeze and rustle of his breathing, he stood very still, nervously rubbing his claw-like hands up and down his trousers-legs. His voice was hoarse and faint.

—*A Commentary*, p. 73.

DESCRIPTION AS ADAPTED TO USE IN FICTION

THE VALLEY OF THE FLOSS¹

GEORGE ELIOT

A WIDE plain, where the broadening Floss hurries on between its green banks to the sea, and the loving tide, rushing to meet it, checks its passage with an impetuous embrace. On this mighty tide the black ships, laden with the fresh-scented fir-planks, with rounded sacks of oil-bearing seed, or with the dark glitter of coal, are borne along to the town of St. Ogg's, which shows its aged, fluted red roofs and the broad gables of its wharves between the low wooded hill and the river brink, tinging the water with a soft purple hue under the transient glance of this February sun. Far away on each hand stretch the rich pastures and the patches of dark earth, made ready for the seed of broad-leaved green crops, or touched already with the tint of the tender-bladed autumn-sown corn. There is a remnant still of the last year's golden clusters of bee-hive ricks rising at intervals beyond the hedge-rows; and everywhere the hedge-rows are studded with the trees; the distant ships seem to be lifting their masts and stretching their red-brown sails close among the branches of the spreading ash. Just by the red-roofed town the tributary Ripple flows with a lively current into the Floss. How lovely the little river is, with its dark, changing wavelets! It seems to me like a living com-

¹ From *The Mill on the Floss*, ch. 1.

panion while I wander along the bank and listen to its low, placid voice, as to the voice of one who is deaf and loving. I remember those large dipping willows. I remember the stone bridge.

And this is Dorlcote Mill. I must stand a minute or two here on the bridge and look at it, though the clouds are threatening, and it is far on in the afternoon. Even in this leafless time of departing February it is pleasant to look at it—perhaps the chill, damp season adds a charm to the trimly-kept, comfortable dwelling-house, as old as the elms and chestnuts that shelter it from the northern blast. The stream is brimful now, and lies high in this little withy plantation, and half drowns the grassy fringe of the croft in front of the house. As I look at the full stream, the vivid grass, the delicate bright-green powder softening the outline of the great trunks and branches that gleam from under the bare purple boughs, I am in love with moistness, and envy the white ducks that are dipping their heads far into the water here among the withes unmindful of the awkward appearance they make in the drier world above.

The rush of the water and the booming of the mill bring a dreamy deafness, which seems to heighten the peacefulness of the scene. They are like a great curtain of sound, shutting one out from the world beyond.

A BRANCH ROAD¹

HAMLIN GARLAND

IN the windless September dawn a voice went singing, a man's voice, singing a cheap and common air. Yet some-

¹ From *Main Travelled Roads*. Copyright, 1883, 1899, by Hamlin Garland.

thing in the sound of it told he was young, jubilant, and a happy lover.

Above the level belt of timber to the east a vast dome of pale undazzling gold was rising, silently and swiftly. Jays called in the thickets where the maples flamed amid the green oaks, with irregular splashes of red and orange. The grass was crisp with frost under the feet, the road smooth and gray-white in color, the air was indescribably sweet, resonant and stimulating. No wonder the man sang!

He came into view around the curve in the lane. He had a fork on his shoulder, a graceful and polished tool. His straw hat was tilted on the back of his head; his rough, faded coat was buttoned close to the chin, and he wore thick buckskin gloves on his hands. He looked muscular and intelligent, and was evidently about twenty-two or three years of age.

As he walked on, and the sunrise came nearer to him, he stopped his song. The broadening heavens had a majesty and sweetness that made him forget the physical joy of happy youth. He grew almost sad with the great vague thoughts and emotions which rolled in his brain as the wonder of the morning grew.

He walked more slowly, mechanically following the road, his eye on the ever-shifting streaming banners of rose and pale-green, which made the east too glorious for any words to tell. The air was so still it seemed to await expectantly the coming of the sun.

Then his mind went forward to Agnes. Would she see it? She was at work, getting breakfast, but he hoped she had time to see it. He was in that mood so common to him now, wherein he could not fully enjoy any sight or sound unless sharing it with her. Far down the road he heard the sharp clatter of a wagon. The roosters were calling near and far, in many keys and tunes. The dogs were barking, cattle-bells were jangling in the wooded

pastures, and as the youth passed farm-houses, lights in the kitchen windows showed that the women were astir about breakfast, and the sound of voices and the tapping of curry-combs at the barn told that the men were at their morning chores.

And the east bloomed broader! The dome of gold grew brighter, the faint clouds here and there flamed with a flush of red. The frost began to glisten with a reflected color. The youth dreamed as he walked; his broad face and deep, earnest eyes caught and reflected some of the beauty and majesty of the sky.

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The pale-red sun was shooting light through the leaves, and warming the boles of the great oaks that stood in the yard, and melting the frost off the great gaudy red and gold-striped threshing machine standing between the stacks. The horses stood about in a circle, hitched to the ends of the six sweeps, every rod shining with frost.

The driver was oiling the great tarry cog-wheels underneath. Laughing fellows were wrestling about the yard. Ed Kinney had scaled the highest stack, and stood ready to throw the first sheaf. The sun, lighting him where he stood, made his fork-handle gleam like dull gold. Cheery words, jests, and snatches of song rose everywhere. Dingman bustled about giving his orders and placing his men, and the voice of big David McTurg was heard calling to the men as they raised the long stacker into place:

“Heave, ho, there! *Up she rises!*”

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“All ready. Hurrah, there!” said David in his soft but resonant bass voice that always had a laugh in it. “Come, come, every sucker of yeh git hold o’ something. All ready!” He waved his hand at the driver, who climbed upon his platform. Everybody scrambled into place.

The driver began to talk:

"*Chk, chk!* All ready, boys! Stiddy there, Dan! *Chk, chk!* All ready now!" The horses began to strain at the sweeps. The cylinder began to hum.

"Grab a root there! Where's my band-cutter? Here you, climb on here!" And David reached down and pulled Shep Watson up by the shoulder with his gigantic hand.

Boo-oo-oo-oom, Boo-woo-woo-oom-oom-ow-owm, yarr, yarr! The whirling cylinder boomed, roared and snarled as it rose in speed. At last, when its tone became a rattling yell, David nodded to the pitchers and rasped his hands together. The sheaves began to fall from the stack; the band-cutter, knife in hand, slashed the bands in twain, and the feeder, with easy majestic movement, gathered them under his arm, rolled them out into an even belt of entering wheat, on which the cylinder tore with its smothered, ferocious snarl.

Will was very happy in a quiet way. He enjoyed the smooth roll of his great muscles, the sense of power he felt in his hands as he lifted, turned, and swung the heavy sheaves two by two upon the table, where the band-cutter madly slashed away. His frame, sturdy rather than tall, was nevertheless lithe, and he made a fine figure to look at, so Agnes thought, as she came out a moment and bowed and smiled.

This scene, one of the jolliest and most sociable of the western farm, had a charm quite aside from human companionship. The beautiful yellow straw entering the cylinder; the clear yellow-brown wheat pulsing out at the side; the broken straw, chaff and dust puffing out on the great stacker; the cheery whistling and calling of the driver; the keen, crisp air, and the bright sun somehow weirdly suggestive of the passage of time.

In the fields the men were harvesting the ripened oats and barley, and the sound of their machines clattering, now low, now loud, came to his ears. Flies buzzed near him, and a kingbird clattered overhead. He noticed again, as he had many a time when a boy, that the softened sound of the far-off reaper was at times exactly like the hum of a blue-bottle fly buzzing heedlessly about his ears.

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He hung for a long time over the railing, thinking of a vast number of things, mostly vague, flitting things, looking into the clear depths of the brook, and listening to the delicious liquid note of a blackbird swinging on the willow. Red lilies starred the grass with fire and golden rod and chicory grew everywhere; purple and orange and yellow-green the prevailing tints.

Suddenly a water-snake wriggled across the dark pool above the ford and the minnows disappeared under the shadow of the bridge. Then Will sighed, lifted his head, and walked on. There seemed to be something prophetic in it, and he drew a long breath! That's the way his plans broke and faded away.

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The boy slipped away through the trees like a rabbit; his little brown feet hardly rustled. He was like some little wood-animal. Left alone, the man went back into a reverie that lasted till the shadows fell on the thick little grove around the spring. He rose at last and, taking his stick in hand, walked out to the wood again and stood there gazing at the sky. He seemed loath to go farther. The sky was full of flame-colored clouds floating in a yellow-green sea, where bars of faint pink streamed broadly away.

As he stood there feeling the wind lift his hair, listening to the crickets' ever-present crying, and facing the majesty

of space, a strange sadness and despair came into his eyes.

Drawing a quick breath, he leaped the fence and was about going on up the road, when he heard, at a little distance, the sound of a drove of cattle approaching, and he stood aside to allow them to pass. They snuffed and shied at the silent figure by the fence, and hurried by with snapping heels—a peculiar sound that made the man smile with pleasure.

EGDON HEATH¹

THOMAS HARDY

A SATURDAY afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight, and the vast tract of unenclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself moment by moment. Overhead the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was as a tent which had the whole heath for its floor.

The heaven being spread with this pallid screen and the earth with the darkest vegetation, their meeting-line at the horizon was clearly marked. In such contrast the heath wore the appearance of an installment of night which had taken up its place before its astronomical hour was come; darkness had to a great extent arrived hereon, while day stood distinct in the sky. Looking upwards, a furze-cutter would have been inclined to continue work; looking down, he would have decided to finish his faggot and go home. The distant rims of the world and of the firmament seemed to be a division in time no less than a division in matter. The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half an hour to evening; it could in

¹ From *The Return of the Native*, chs. 1-3. Harper & Brothers.

like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread.

In fact, precisely at this transitional point of its nightly roll into darkness the great and particular glory of the Egdon waste began, and nobody could be said to understand the heath who had not been there at such a time. It could best be felt when it could not clearly be seen, its complete effect and explanation lying in this and the succeeding hours before the dawn; then, and only then, did it tell its true tale. The spot was, indeed, a near relation of night, and when night showed itself, an apparent tendency to gravitate together could be perceived in its shades and the scene. The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it. And so the obscurity in the air and the obscurity in the land closed together in a black fraternization towards which each advanced halfway.

The place became full of a watchful intentness now; for when other things sank brooding to sleep the heath appeared slowly to awake and listen. Every night its Titanic form seemed to await something; but it had waited thus, unmoved, during so many centuries, through the crises of so many things, that it could only be imagined to await one last crisis—the final overthrow. . . .

. . . Twilight combined with the scenery of Egdon Heath to evolve a thing majestic without severity, impressive without showiness, emphatic in its admonitions, grand in its simplicity. . . .

The most thorough-going ascetic could feel that he had a natural right to wander on Egdon: he was keeping within the line of legitimate indulgence when he laid himself open to influences such as these. Colours and

beauties so far subdued were, at least, the birthright of all. Only in summer days of highest feather did its mood touch the level of gayety. Intensity was more usually reached by way of the solemn than by way of the brilliant, and such a sort of intensity was often arrived at during winter darkness, tempests, and mists. Then Egdon was aroused to reciprocity; for the storm was its lover, and the wind its friend. Then it became the home of strange phantoms; and it was found to be the hitherto unrecognized original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster, and are never thought of after the dream till revived by scenes like this.

It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man's nature—neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly: neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring: and withal, singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony. As with some persons who have long lived far apart, solitude seemed to look out of its countenance. It had a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities. . . .

Had a looker-on been posted in the immediate vicinity of the barrow, he would have learned that these persons were boys and men of the neighbouring hamlets. Each, as he ascended the barrow, had been heavily laden with furze-faggots, carried upon the shoulder by means of a long stake, sharpened at each end for impaling them easily—two in front and two behind. They came from a part of the heath a quarter of a mile to the rear, where furze almost exclusively prevailed as a product.

Every individual was so involved in furze by his method of carrying the faggots that he appeared like a bush on legs till he had thrown them down. The party had marched in trail, like a travelling flock of sheep; that is to say, the strongest first, the weak and young behind.

The loads were all laid together, and a pyramid of furze thirty feet in circumference now occupied the crown of the tumulus, which was known as Rainbarrow for many miles round. Some made themselves busy with matches, and in selecting the driest tufts of furze, others in loosening the bramble bonds which held the faggots together. Others, again, while this was in progress, lifted their eyes and swept the vast expanse of country commanded by their position, now lying nearly obliterated by shade. In the valleys of the heath nothing save its own wild face was visible at any time of day; but this spot commanded a horizon enclosing a tract of far extent, and in many cases lying beyond the heath country. None of its features could be seen now, but the whole made itself felt as a vague stretch of remoteness.

While the men and lads were building the pile, a change took place in the mass of shade which denoted the distant landscape. Red suns and tufts of fire one by one began to arise, flecking the whole country round. They were the bonfires of other parishes and hamlets that were engaged in the same sort of commemoration. Some were distant, and stood in a dense atmosphere, so that bundles of pale, straw like beams radiated around them in the shape of a fan. Some were large and near, glowing scarlet-red from the shade, like wounds in a black hide. Some were Mænades, with winy faces and blown hair. These tintured the silent bosom of the clouds above them and lit up their ephemeral caves, which seemed thenceforth to become scalding caldrons. Perhaps as many as thirty bonfires could be counted within the whole bounds of the district; and as the hour may be told on a clock face, when the figures themselves are invisible, so did the men recognize the locality of each fire by its angle and direction, though nothing of the scenery could be viewed.

The first tall flame from Rainbarrow sprang into the sky, attracting all eyes that had been fixed on the distant conflagrations back to their own attempt in the same kind. The cheerful blaze streaked the inner surface of the human circle—now increased by other stragglers, male and female—with its own gold livery, and even overlaid the dark turf around with a lively luminousness, which softened off into obscurity where the barrow rounded downwards out of sight. It showed the barrow to be the segment of a globe, as perfect as on the day when it was thrown up, even the little ditch remaining from which the earth was dug. Not a plough had ever disturbed a grain of that stubborn soil. In the heath's barrenness to the farmer lay its fertility to the historian. There had been no obliteration, because there had been no tending.

It was as if the bonfire-makers were standing in some radiant upper storey of the world, detached from and independent of the dark stretches below. The heath down there was now a vast abyss, and no longer a continuation of what they stood on; for their eyes, adapted to the blaze, could see nothing of the deeps beyond its influence. Occasionally, it is true, a more vigorous flare than usual from their faggots sent darting lights like aides-de-camp down the inclines to some distant bush, pool, or patch of white sand, kindling these to replies of the same colour, till all was lost in darkness again. Then the whole black phenomenon beneath represented Limbo as viewed from the brink by the sublime Florentine in his vision, and the muttered articulations of the wind in the hollows were as complaints and petitions from the "souls of mighty worth" suspended therein.

It was as if these men and boys had suddenly dived into past ages, and fetched therefrom an hour and deed which had before been familiar with this spot. The

ashes of the original British pyre which blazed from that summit lay fresh and undisturbed in the barrow beneath their tread. The flames from funeral piles long ago kindled there had shone down upon the lowlands as these were shining now. Festival fires to Thor and Woden had followed on the same ground and duly had their day. Indeed, it is pretty well known that such blazes as this the heathmen were now enjoying are rather the lineal descendants from jumbled Druidical rites and Saxon ceremonies than the invention of popular feeling about the Gunpowder Plot.

Moreover, to light a fire is the instinctive and resistant act of man when, at the winter ingress, the curfew is sounded through our Nature. It indicates a spontaneous, Promethean rebelliousness against the fiat that this recurrent season shall bring foul times, cold darkness, misery and death. Black chaos comes, and the fettered gods of the earth say, Let there be light.

The brilliant lights and sooty shades which struggled upon the skin and clothes of the persons standing round caused their lineaments and general contours to be drawn with Dureresque vigor and dash. Yet the permanent moral expression of each face it was impossible to discover, for as the nimble flames towered, nodded, and swooped through the surrounding air, the blots of shade and flakes of light upon the countenances of the group changed shape and position ~~endlessly~~ ^{fitfully}. All was unstable; quivering as leaves, ~~evanescent~~ ^{fitful} as lightning. Shadowy eye-sockets, deep as those of a death's head, suddenly turned into pits of lustre: a lantern-jaw was cavernous, then it was shining; wrinkles were emphasized to ravines, or obliterated entirely by a changed ray. Nostrils were dark wells; sinews in old necks were gilt mouldings; things with no particular polish on them were glazed; bright objects, such as the tip of a furze-hook one of the

men carried, were as glass; eye-balls glowed like little lanterns. Those whom Nature had depicted as merely quaint became grotesque, the grotesque became preternatural; for all was in extremity.

GLIMPSES OF CITY STREETS¹

JOHN GALSWORTHY

IN that darkness were all the shapes and lights and shadows of a London night in spring; the trees in dark bloom; the wan yellow of the gas-lamps, pale emblems of the self-consciousness of towns; the clustered shades of the tiny leaves, spilled, purple, on the surface of the road, like bunches of black grapes squeezed down into the earth by the feet of the passers-by. There, too, were shapes of men and women hurrying home, and the great blocked shapes of the houses where they lived. A halo hovered above the City—a high haze of yellow light, dimming the stars. The black slow figure of a policeman moved noiselessly along the railings opposite.

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Thyme raised her eyes obediently. In this main thoroughfare it was not as in the by-street, and only chill or sullen glances, or none at all, were bent on her. Some of the houses had ragged plants on the window-sill; in one window a canary was singing. Then, at a bend, they came into a blacker reach of human river. Here were outbuildings, houses with broken windows, houses with windows boarded up, fried-fish shops, low public houses, houses without doors. There were more men here than women, and those men were wheeling barrows full of rags

¹ From *Fraternity*, pp. 37, 133, 154, 330. By permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

and bottles, or not even full of rags and bottles; or they were standing by the public-houses gossiping or quarrelling in groups of three or four; or very slowly walking in the gutters, or on the pavements, as though trying to remember if they were alive. Then suddenly some young man with gaunt violence in his face would pass, pushing his barrow desperately, striding fiercely by. And every now and then, from a fried-fish shop or hardware shop, would come out a man in a dirty apron to take the sun and contemplate the scene, not finding in it, seemingly, anything that depressed his spirit. Amongst the constant, crawling, shifting stream of passengers were seen women carrying food wrapped up in a newspaper, or with bundles beneath their shawls. The faces of these women were generally either very red and coarse or of a sort of bluish-white; they wore the expression of such as know themselves to be existing in the way that Providence has arranged that they should exist. No surprise, revolt, dismay, or shame was ever to be seen on those faces; in place of these emotions a drab and brutish acquiescence or mechanical coarse jocularity. To pass like this about their business was their occupation each morning of the year; it was needful to accept it. Not having any hope of ever being different, not being able to imagine any other life, they were not so wasteful of their strength as to attempt either to hope or to imagine. Here and there, too, very slowly passed old men and women, crawling along, like winter bees who, in some strange and evil moment, had forgotten to die in the sunlight of their toil, and, too old to be of use, had been chivied forth from their hive to perish slowly in the cold and hungry twilight.

Down the centre of the street Thyme saw a brewer's dray creeping its way due south under the sun. Three horses drew it, with braided tails and beribboned manes,

the brass glittering on their harness. High up, like a god, sat the drayman, his little slits of eyes, above huge red cheeks, fixed immovably on his horses' crests. Behind him, with slow, unceasing crunch, the dray rolled, piled up with hogsheads, whereon the drayman's mate lay sleeping. Like the slumbrous image of some mighty unrelenting Power, it passed, proud that its monstrous bulk contained all the joy and blessing those shadows on the pavement had ever known.

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The tide of life was flowing in the town. The streets were awash with wave on wave of humanity, sucked into a thousand crossing currents. Here men and women were streaming out from the meeting of some religious congress, there streaming in at the gates of some social function; like bright water confined within long shelves of rock and dyed with myriad scales of shifting color, they thronged Rotten Row, and along the closed shop-fronts were woven into an inextricable net-work of little human runlets. And everywhere amongst this sea of men and women could be seen their shadows, meandering like streaks of grey slime stirred up from the lower depths by some huge, never-ceasing finger. The innumerable roar of that human sea climbed out above the roofs and trees, and somewhere in illimitable space blended, and slowly reached the meeting-point of sound and silence—that Heart where Life, leaving its little forms and barriers, clasps Death, and from that clasp brings forth new-formed, within new barriers.

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Hampstead had obviously been made by the upper classes. There were trees and gardens, and instead of dark canals of sky banked by the roofs of houses and hazed with the yellow sun of London lights, the heavens spread out in a wide trembling pool. From the rampart

of the town, the Spaniard's Road, two plains lay exposed to left and right; the scent of may-tree blossoms had stolen up the hill; the rising moon clung to a fir-tree bough. Over the country the far stars presided, and sleep's dark wings were spread above the fields—silent, scarce breathing, lay the body of the land. But to the south, where the town, that restless head, was lying, the stars seemed to have fallen, and were sown in the thousand furrows of its grey marsh, and from the dark miasma of those streets there travelled up a rustle, a whisper, the far allurements of some deathless dancer, dragging men to watch the swirl of her black, spangled drapery, the gleam of her writhing limbs. Like the song of the sea in a shell was the murmur of that witch of motion, clasping to her the souls of men, drawing them down into a soul whom none had ever seen at rest.

THE OLD SEA-DOG¹

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

I REMEMBER him as if it were yesterday, as he came plodding to the inn door, his sea-chest following behind him in a hand-barrow; a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man; his tarry pig-tail falling over the shoulders of his soiled blue coat; his hands ragged and scarred with black, broken nails, and the sabre-cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. I remember him looking round the cove and whistling to himself as he did so, and then breaking out in that old sea-song that he sung so often afterwards:

“Fifteen men on the dead man's chest,
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!”

¹ From *Treasure Island*, ch. 1. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

in the high, old tottering voice that seemed to have been tuned and broken at the capstan bars. Then he rapped on the door with a bit of stick like a handspike that he carried, and when my father appeared, called roughly for a glass of rum. This, when it was brought to him, he drank slowly, like a connoisseur, lingering on the taste, and still looking about him at the cliffs and up at our signboard.

"This is a handy cove," said he, at length; "and a pleasant sittiyated grog-shop. Much company, mate?"

My father told him no, very little company, the more was the pity.

"Well, then," said he, "this is the berth for me. Here you, matey," he cried to the man who trundled the barrow; "bring up alongside and help up my chest. I'll stay here a bit," he continued. "I'm a plain man; rum and bacon and eggs is what I want, and that head up there for to watch ships off. What you mought call me? You mought call me captain. Oh, I see what you are at—there;" and he threw down three or four gold pieces on the threshold. "You can tell me when I've worked through that," said he, looking as fierce as a commander.

DAVID¹

JAMES LANE ALLEN

As he hobbled on towards the public square, he came to an elm-tree which cast a thick cooling shade on the sidewalk, and sitting down, he laid his rickety crutch beside him, and drew out of the pocket of his home-made tow breeches a tangled mass of articles—pieces of violin strings, all of which had plainly seen service under the bow at many a dance; three old screws, belonging in

¹ Flute and Violin, pp. 23-25. By permission of the Macmillan Co.

their times to different violin heads; two lumps of resin, one a rather large lump of dark color and common quality, the other a small lump of transparent amber wrapped sacredly to itself in a little brown paper bag labelled "Cucumber Seed;" a pair of epaulets, the brass fringes of which were tarnished and torn; and further miscellany.

These treasures he laid out one by one, first brushing off the dirt off the sidewalk with the palm of one dirty hand, and then putting his mouth close down to blow away any loose particles that might remain to soil them; and when they were all displayed, he propped himself on one elbow, and stretched his figure caressingly beside them.

A pretty picture the lad made as he lay there dreaming over his earthly possessions—a pretty picture in the shade of the great elm, that sultry morning of August, three-quarters of a century ago! The presence of the crutch showed there was something sad about it; and so there was; for if you had glanced at the little bare brown foot, set toes upward on the curb-stone, you would have discovered that the fellow to it was missing—cut off about two inches above the ankle. And if this had caused you to throw a look of sympathy at his face, something yet sadder must long have held your attention. Set jauntily on the back of his head was a weather-beaten dark blue cloth cap, the patent-leather frontlet of which was gone; and beneath the ragged edge of this there fell down over his forehead and temples and ears a tangled mass of softly yellow hair, slightly curling. His eyes were large, and of a blue to match the depths of the calm sky above the tree-tops; the long lashes which curtained them were brown; his lips were red, his nose delicate and fine, and his cheeks tanned to the color of ripe peaches. It was a singularly winning face, intelligent, frank, not describable. On it now rested a smile, half joyous, half sad, as though

his mind was full of bright hopes, the realization of which was far away. From his neck fell the wide collar of a white cotton shirt, clean but frayed at the elbows, and open and buttonless down his bosom. Over this he wore an old-fashioned satin waistcoat of a man, also frayed and buttonless. His dress was completed by a pair of baggy tow breeches, held up by a single tow suspender fastened to big brown horn buttons.

After a while he sat up, letting his foot hang down over the curb-stone, and uncoiling the longest of the treble strings, he put one end between his shining teeth, and stretched it tight by holding the other end off between his thumb and forefinger. Then, waving in the air in his other hand an imaginary bow, with his head resting a little on one side, his eyelids drooping, his mind in a state of dreamy delight, the little musician began to play—began to play the violin that he had long been working for, and hoped would some day become his own.

It was nothing to him now that his whole performance consisted of one broken string. It was nothing to him, as his body rocked gently to and fro, that he could not hear the music which ravished his soul. So real was that music to him that at intervals, with a little frown of vexation as though things were not going perfectly, he would stop, take up the small lump of costly resin, and pretend to rub it vigorously on the hair of the fancied bow. Then he would awake that delicious music again, playing more ecstatically, more passionately than before.

HEPZIBAH PYNCHION AND HER SHOP¹

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

HERE, at last—with another pitiful sigh, like a gust of chill, damp wind out of a long-closed vault, the door of which has accidentally been set ajar—here comes Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon! Forth she steps into the dusky, time-darkened passage; a tall figure, clad in black silk, with a long and shrunken waist, feeling her way towards the stairs like a near-sighted person, as in truth she is.

The sun, meanwhile, if not already above the horizon, was ascending nearer and nearer to its verge. A few clouds, floating high upward, caught some of the earliest light, and threw down its golden gleam on the windows of all the houses in the street, not forgetting the House of the Seven Gables, which—many such sunrises as it had witnessed—looked cheerfully at the present one. The reflected radiance served to show, pretty distinctly, the aspect and arrangement of the room which Hepzibah entered, after descending the stairs. It was a low-studded room, with a beam across the ceiling, panelled with dark wood, and having a large chimney-piece, set round with pictured tiles, but now closed by an iron fire-board, through which ran the funnel of a modern stove. There was a carpet on the floor, originally of rich texture, but so worn and faded, in these latter years, that its once brilliant figure had quite vanished into one indistinguishable hue. In the way of furniture, there were two tables: one, constructed with perplexing intricacy, and exhibiting as many feet as a centipede; the other, most delicately wrought, with four long and slender legs, so apparently

¹ From *The House of the Seven Gables*, ch. 2. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

frail that it was almost incredible what a length of time the ancient tea-table had stood upon them. Half a dozen chairs stood about the room, straight and stiff and so ingeniously contrived for the discomfort of the human person that they were irksome even to sight, and conveyed the ugliest possible idea of the state of society to which they could have been adapted. One exception there was, however, in a very antique elbow-chair, with a high back, carved elaborately in oak, and a roomy depth within its arms, that made up, by its spacious comprehensiveness, for the lack of any of those artistic curves which abound in a modern chair.

As for ornamental articles of furniture, we recollect but two, if such they may be called. One was a map of the Pyncheon territory at the eastward, not engraved, but the handiwork of some skilful old draftsman, and grotesquely illuminated with pictures of Indians and wild beasts, among which was seen a lion; the natural history of the region being as little known as its geography, which was put down most fantastically awry. The other adornment was the portrait of old Colonel Pyncheon, at two-thirds length, representing the stern features of a puritanic-looking personage, in a skull-cap, with a laced band and a grizzly beard; holding a Bible with one hand, and in the other uplifting an iron sword-hilt. The latter object, being more successfully depicted by the artist, stood out in far greater prominence than the sacred volume. Face to face with this picture, on entering the apartment, Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon came to a pause; regarding it with a singular scowl, a strange contortion of the brow, which, by people who did not know her, would probably have been interpreted as an expression of bitter anger and ill-will. But it was no such thing. She in fact felt a reverence for the pictured visage of which only a far-descended and time-stricken virgin could be susceptible; and this

forbidding scowl was the innocent result of her near-sightedness, and an effort so to concentrate her powers of vision as to substitute a firm outline of the object instead of a vague one.

We must linger a moment on this unfortunate expression of poor Hepzibah's brow. Her scowl—as the world, or such part of it as sometimes caught a transitory glimpse of her at the window, wickedly persisted in calling it—her scowl had done Miss Hepzibah a very ill office, in establishing her character as an ill-tempered old maid; nor does it appear improbable that, by often gazing at herself in a dim looking-glass, and perpetually encountering her own frown within its ghostly sphere, she had been led to interpret the expression almost as unjustly as the world did. “How miserably cross I look!” she must often have whispered to herself;—and ultimately have fancied herself so, by a sense of inevitable doom. But her heart never frowned. It was naturally tender, sensitive, and full of little tremors and palpitations; all of which weaknesses it retained, while her visage was growing so perversely stern, and even fierce. Nor had Hepzibah ever any hardihood, except what came from the very warmest nook in her affections.

All this time, however, we are loitering faint-heartedly on the threshold of our story. In very truth, we have an invincible reluctance to disclose what Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon was about to do.

It has already been observed, that, in the basement story of the gable fronting on the street, an unworthy ancestor, nearly a century ago, had fitted up a shop. Ever since the old gentleman retired from the trade, and fell asleep under his coffin-lid, not only the shop-door, but the inner arrangements, had been suffered to remain unchanged; while the dust of ages gathered inch-deep over the shelves and counter, and partly filled an old pair of

scales, as if it were of value enough to be weighed. It treasured itself up, too, in the half-open till, where there still lingered a base sixpence, worth neither more nor less than the hereditary pride which had here been put to shame. Such had been the state and condition of the little shop in old Hepzibah's childhood, when she and her brother used to play at hide-and-seek in its forsaken precincts. So it had remained, until within a few days past.

But now, though the shop-window was still closely curtained from the public gaze, a remarkable change had taken place in its interior. The rich and heavy festoons of cobweb, which it had cost a long ancestral succession of spiders their life's labor to spin and weave, had been carefully brushed away from the ceiling. The counter, shelves, and floor, had all been scoured, and the latter was overstrewn with fresh blue sand. The brown scales, too, had evidently undergone rigid discipline, in an un-availing effort to rub off the rust, which, alas! had eaten through and through their substance. Neither was the little shop any longer empty of merchantable goods. A curious eye, privileged to take an account of stock, and investigate behind the counter, would have discovered a barrel,—yea, two or three barrels and half ditto,—one containing flour, another apples, and a third, perhaps, Indian meal. There was likewise a square box of pine-wood, full of soap in bars; also, another of the same size, in which were tallow candles, ten to the pound. A small stock of brown sugar, some white beans and split peas and a few other commodities of low price, and such as are constantly in demand, made up the bulkier portion of the merchandise. It might have been taken for a ghostly or phantasmagoric reflection of the old shop-keeper Pyncheon's shabbily-provided shelves, save that some of the articles were of a description and outward form which

could hardly have been known in his day. For instance, there was a glass pickle-jar, filled with fragments of Gibraltar rock; not, indeed, splinters of the veritable stone foundation of the famous fortress, but bits of delectable candy, neatly done up in white paper. Jim Crow, moreover, was seen executing his world-renowned dance, in gingerbread. A party of leaden dragoons were galloping along one of the shelves, in equipments and uniform of modern cut; and there were some sugar figures, with no strong resemblance to the humanity of any epoch, but less unsatisfactorily representing our own fashions than those of a hundred years ago. Another phenomenon, still more strikingly modern, was a package of lucifer matches, which, in old times, would have been thought actually to borrow their instantaneous flame from the nether fires of Tophet.

In short, to bring the matter at once to a point, it was incontrovertibly evident that somebody had taken the shop and fixtures of the long-retired and forgotten Mr. Pyncheon, and was about to renew the enterprise of that departed worthy, with a different set of customers. Who could this bold adventurer be? And, of all places in the world, why had he chosen the House of the Seven Gables as the scene of his commercial speculations?

We return to the elderly maiden. She at length withdrew her eyes from the dark countenance of the colonel's portrait, heaved a sigh,—indeed, her breast was a very cave of Æolus, that morning,—and stept across the room on tiptoe, as is the customary gait of elderly women. Passing through an intervening passage, she opened a door that communicated with the shop just now so elaborately described. Owing to the projection of the upper story—and still more to the thick shadow of the Pyncheon-elm, which stood almost directly in front of the gable—the twilight, here, was still as much akin to

night as morning. Another heavy sigh from Miss Hepzibah! After a moment's pause on the threshold, peering towards the window with her near-sighted scowl, as if frowning down some bitter enemy, she suddenly projected herself into the shop. The haste, and, as it were, the galvanic impulse of the movement, were really quite startling.

Nervously—in a sort of frenzy, we might almost say—she began to busy herself in arranging some children's playthings, and other little wares, on the shelves and at the shop-window. In the aspect of this dark-arrayed, pale-faced, lady-like old figure, there was a deeply tragic character, that contrasted irreconcilably with the ludicrous pettiness of her employment. It seemed a queer anomaly, that so gaunt and dismal a personage should take a toy in hand; a miracle, that the toy did not vanish in her grasp; a miserably absurd idea, that she should go on perplexing her stiff and sombre intellect with the question how to tempt little boys into her premises! Yet such is undoubtedly her object. Now she places a gingerbread elephant against the window, but with so tremulous a touch that it tumbles upon the floor, with the dismemberment of three legs and its trunk; it has ceased to be an elephant and has become a few bits of musty gingerbread. There, again, she has upset a tumbler of marbles, all of which roll different ways, and each individual marble, devil-directed, into the most difficult obscurity that it can find. Heaven help our poor old Hepzibah, and forgive us for taking a ludicrous view of her position! As her rigid and rusty frame goes down upon its hands and knees, in quest of the absconding marbles, we positively feel so much the more inclined to shed tears of sympathy, from the very fact that we must needs turn aside and laugh at her. For here—and if we fail to impress it suitably upon the reader, it is our own fault, not that of the

theme—here is one of the truest points of melancholy interest that occur in ordinary life. It was the final throes of what called itself old gentility. A lady—who had fed herself from childhood with the shadowy food of aristocratic reminiscences, and whose religion it was that a lady's hand soils itself irremediably by doing aught for bread—this born lady, after sixty years of narrowing means, is fain to step down from her pedestal of imaginary rank. Poverty, treading closely at her heels for a lifetime, has come up with her at last. She must earn her own food or starve! And we have stolen upon Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon, too irreverently, at the instant of time when the patrician lady is to be transformed into the plebeian woman.

A COUNTRY DANCE¹

GEORGE ELIOT

SOLOMON MACEY, a small, hale old man, with an abundant crop of long white hair reaching nearly to his shoulders, advanced to the indicated spot, bowing reverently while he fiddled, as much as to say that he respected the company though he respected the key-note more. As soon as he had repeated the tune and lowered the fiddle, he bowed again to the Squire and the Rector, and said, "I hope I see your honour and your reverence well, and wishing you health and long life and a happy New Year. And wishing the same to you, Mr. Lammeter, sir; and to the other gentlemen, and the madams, and the young lasses."

As Solomon uttered the last words, he bowed in all directions solicitously, lest he should be wanting in all due respect. But thereupon he immediately began to

¹ From *Silas Marner*, ch. 11.

prelude, and fell into the tune which he knew would be taken as a special compliment by Mr. Lammeter.

"Thank ye, Solomon, thank ye," said Mr. Lammeter when the fiddle paused again. "That's 'Over the hills and far away,' that is. My father used to say to me, whenever he heard that tune, 'Ah, lad, *I* come from over the hills and far away.' There's a many tunes I don't make head or tail of; but that speaks to me like the blackbird's whistle. I suppose it's the name: there's a deal in the name of a tune."

But Solomon was already impatient to prelude again, and presently broke with much spirit into "Sir Roger de Coverley," at which there was a sound of chairs pushed back, and laughing voices.

"Ay, ay, Solomon, we know what that means," said the Squire, rising. "It's time to begin the dance, eh? Lead the way, then, and we'll all follow you."

So Solomon, holding his white head on one side, and playing vigorously, marched forward at the head of the gay procession into the White Parlour, where the mistle-toe bough was hung, and multitudinous candles made rather a brilliant effect, gleaming from among the berried holly-boughs, and reflected in the old-fashioned oval mirrors fastened in the panels of the white wainscot. A quaint procession! Old Solomon, in his seedy clothes and long white locks, seemed to be luring that decent company by the magic scream of his fiddle—luring discreet matrons in turban-shaped caps, nay, Mrs. Crackenthorp herself, the summit of whose perpendicular feather was on a level with the Squire's shoulder—luring fair lasses complacently conscious of very short waists and skirts blameless of front-folds—luring burly fathers in large variegated waistcoats, and ruddy sons, for the most part shy and sheepish, in short nether garments and very long coat-tails.

Already Mr. Macey and a few other privileged villagers, who were allowed to be spectators on these great occasions, were seated on benches placed for them near the door; and great was the admiration and satisfaction in that quarter when the couples had formed themselves for the dance, and the Squire led off with Mrs. Crackenthorp, joining hands with the Rector and Mrs. Osgood. . . .

"The Squire's pretty springe, considering his weight," said Mr. Macey, "and he stamps uncommon well. But Mr. Lammeter beats 'em all for shapes; you see he holds his head like a sodger, and he isn't so cushiony as most o' the oldish gentlefolks—they run fat in general; and he's got a fine leg. The parson's nimble enough, but he hasn't got much of a leg: it's a bit too thick down'ard, and his knees might be a bit nearer wi'out damage; but he might do worse, he might do worse. Though he hasn't that grand way o' waving his hand as the Squire has."

"Talk o' nimbleness, look at Mrs. Osgood," said Ben Winthrop, who was holding his son Aaron between his knees. "She trips along with her little steps, so as nobody can see how she goes—it's like as if she had little wheels to her feet. She doesn't look a day older nor last year: she's the finest-made woman as is, let the next be where she will."

"I don't heed how the women are made," said Mr. Macey, with some contempt. "They wear nayther coat nor breeches: you can't make much out o' their shapes."

"Fayder," said Aaron, whose feet were busy beating out the tune, "how does that big cock's feather stick in Mrs. Crackenthorp's yead? Is there a little hole for it, like in my shuttlecock?"

"Hush, lad, hush; that's the way the ladies dress theirselves, that is," said the father, adding, however, in an undertone to Mr. Macey, "it does make her look funny, though—partly like a short-necked bottle wi' a

long quill in it. Hey, by jingo, there's the young squire leading off now wi' Miss Nancy for partners! There's a lass for you!—like a pink-and-white posy—there's nobody 'ud think as anybody could be so pritty. I shouldn't wonder if she's Madam Cass some day, after all—and nobody more rightfuller, for they'd make a fine match."

SILAS MARNER¹

GEORGE ELIOT

FOR how was it possible to believe that those large brown protuberant eyes in Silas Marner's pale face really saw nothing very distinctly that was not close to them, and not rather that their dreadful stare could dart cramp, or rickets, or a wry mouth at any boy who happened to in the rear? . . .

The expression of trusting simplicity in Marner's face, heightened by that absence of special observation, that defenceless, deerlike gaze which belongs to large prominent eyes, was strongly contrasted by the self-complacent suppression of inward triumph that lurked in the narrow slanting eyes and compressed lips of William Dane. . . .

Strangely Marner's face and figure shrank and bent themselves into a constant mechanical relation to the objects of his life, so that he produced the same sort of impression as a handle or a crooked tube, which has no meaning standing apart. The prominent eyes that used to look trusting and dreamy, now looked as if they had been made to see only one kind of thing that was very small, like tiny grain, for which they hunted everywhere; and he was so withered and yellow that, though he was not yet forty, the children always called him "Old Master Marner." . . .

¹ From *Silas Marner*.

Any one who had looked at him as the red light shone upon his pale face, strange straining eyes, and meagre form, would perhaps have understood the mixture of contemptuous pity, dread, and suspicion with which he was regarded by his neighbors in Raveloe. . . .

The pale thin figure of Silas Marner was suddenly seen standing in the warm light, uttering no word, but looking round at the company with his strange unearthly eyes. The long pipes gave a simultaneous movement, like the antennæ of startled insects, and every man present, not excepting even the sceptical farrier, had an impression that he saw, not Silas Marner in the flesh, but an apparition; for the door by which Silas had entered was hidden by the high-screened seats, and no one had noticed his approach. . . .

"Come, Master Marner, why, you've no call to sit amoaning. You've a deal better off to ha' lost your money, nor to ha' kep' it by foul means. I used to think, when you first come into these parts, as you were no better nor you should be; you were younger a deal than what you are now; but you were allays a staring, white-faced creatur, partly like a bald-faced calf, as I may say. But there's no knowing: it isn't every queer-looksd thing as Old Harry's had the making of—I mean, speaking o' toads and such; for they're often harmless, and useful against varmin. And it's pretty much the same wi' you, as fur as I can see." . . .

But it is impossible to mistake Silas Marner. His large brown eyes seem to have gathered a longer vision, as is the way with eyes that have been short-sighted in early life, and they have a less vague, a more answering gaze; but in everything else one sees signs of a frame much enfeebled by the lapse of the sixteen years. The weaver's bent shoulders and white hair give him almost the look of advanced age, though he is not more than five-and-fifty.

MAGGIE TULLIVER¹

GEORGE ELIOT

"You talk o' cuteness, Mr. Tulliver," she observed as she sat down, "but I'm sure the child's half an idiot i' some things; for if I send her upstairs to fetch anything, she forgets what she's gone for, an' perhaps'll sit down on the floor i' the sunshine an' plait her hair an' sing to herself like a Bedlam creatur', all the while I'm waiting for her down stairs. That niver run i' my family, thank God, no more nor a brown skin as makes her look like a mulatter. I don't like to fly in the face of Providence, but it seems hard as I should have but one gell, a' her so comical."

"Pooh! nonsense!" said Mr. Tulliver; "she's a straight black-eyed wench as anybody need wish to see. I don't know i' what she's behind other folk's children; and she can read almost as well as the parson."

"But her hair won't curl all I can do with it, and she's so franzy about having it put i' paper, and I've such work as never was to make her stand and have it pinched with th' irons."

"Cut it off—cut it off short," said the father, rashly.

"How can you talk so, Mr. Tulliver? She's too big a gell, gone nine, and tall of her age, to have her hair cut short; and there's her cousin Lucy's got a row o' curls round her head, an' not a hair out o' place. It seems hard as my sister Deane should have that pretty child; I'm sure Lucy takes more after me nor my own child does. Maggie, Maggie," continued the mother, in a tone of half-coaxing fretfulness, as this small mistake of nature entered the room, "where's the use o' my telling you to

¹ From *The Mill on the Floss*.

keep away from the water? You'll tumble in and be drowned some day, and then you'll be sorry you didn't do as mother told you."

Maggie's hair, as she threw off her bonnet, painfully confirmed her mother's accusation: Mrs. Tulliver, desiring her daughter to have a curled crop, "like other folk's children," had had it cut too short in front to be pushed behind the ears; and as it was usually straight an hour after it had been taken out of paper, Maggie was incessantly tossing her head to keep the dark heavy locks out of her gleaming black eyes—an action which gave her very much the air of a small Shetland pony.

Maggie, with deepening color, went without hesitation to Mr. Riley's elbow and looked over the book, eagerly seizing one corner and tossing back her mane.

Hanging diligently over her sewing, Maggie was a sight any one might have been pleased to look at. That new inward life of hers, notwithstanding some volcanic upheavings of imprisoned passions, yet shone out in her face with a tender, soft light that mingled itself as added loveliness with the gradually enriched color and outline of her blossoming youth. Her mother felt the change in her with a sort of puzzled wonder that Maggie should be "growing up so good;" it was amazing that this once "contrairy" child was become so submissive, so backward to assert her own will. Maggie used to look up from her work and find her mother's eyes fixed upon her; they were watching and waiting for the large young glance, as if her elder frame got some needful warmth from it. The mother was getting fond of her tall, brown girl, the only bit of furniture now on which she could bestow her anxiety and pride; and Maggie, in spite of her own ascetic wish to have no personal adornment, was obliged to give

way to her mother about her hair, and submit to have the abundant black locks plaited into a coronet on the summit of her head, after the pitiable fashion of those antiquated times.

"Let your mother have that bit o' pleasure, my dear," said Mrs. Tulliver; "I'd trouble enough with your hair once."

So Maggie, glad of anything that would soothe her mother, and cheer their long day together, consented to the vain decoration, and showed a queenly head above her old frocks—steadily refusing, however, to look at herself in the glass.

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You may see her now, as she walks down the favorite turning, and enters the Deeps by a narrow path through a group of Scotch firs—her tall figure and old lavender gown visible through an hereditary black silk shawl of some wide-meshed net-like material; and now she is sure of being unseen, she takes off her bonnet and ties it over her arm. One would certainly suppose her to be farther on in life than her seventeenth year—perhaps because of the slow resigned sadness of the glance, from which all search and unrest seem to have departed, perhaps because her broad-chested figure has the mould of early womanhood. Youth and health have withstood the involuntary and voluntary hardships of her lot, and the nights in which she has lain on the hard floor for a penance have left no obvious trace: the eyes are liquid, the brown cheek is firm and rounded, the full lips are red. With her dark coloring and jet crown surmounting her tall figure, she seems to have a sort of kinship with the grand Scotch firs, at which she is looking up as if she loved them well. Yet one has a sense of uneasiness in looking at her—a sense of opposing elements, of which a fierce collision is imminent: surely there is a hushed expression,

such as one often sees in older faces under borderless caps, out of keeping with the resistant youth, which one expects to flash out in a sudden, passionate glance, that will dissipate all the quietude, like a damped fire leaping out again when all seemed safe.

URIAH HEEP¹

CHARLES DICKENS

WHEN the pony-chaise stopped at the door, and my eyes were intent upon the house, I saw a cadaverous face appear at a small window on the ground floor (in a little round tower that formed one side of the house), and quickly disappear. The low arched door then opened, and the face came out. It was quite as cadaverous as it had looked in the window, though in the grain of it there was that tinge of red which is sometimes to be observed in the skins of red-haired people. It belonged to a red-haired person—a youth of fifteen, as I take it now, but looking much older—whose hair was cropped as close as the closest stubble; who had hardly any eyebrows, and no eyelashes, and eyes of a red-brown, so unsheltered and unshaded, that I remember wondering how he went to sleep. He was high-shouldered and bony; dressed in decent black, with a white wisp of a neck-cloth, buttoned up to the throat; and had a long, lank, skeleton hand, which particularly attracted my attention, as he stood at the pony's head, rubbing his chin with it, and looking up at us in the chaise. . . .

Uriah, having taken the pony to a neighboring stable, was at work at a desk in this room, which had a brass

¹ From *David Copperfield*.

frame on the top to hang papers upon, and on which the writing he was making a copy of was then hanging. Though his face was towards me, I thought, for some time, the writing being between us, that he could not see me; but looking that way more attentively, it made me uncomfortable to observe that, every now and then, his sleepless eyes would come below the writing, like two red suns, and stealthily stare at me for I dare say a whole minute at a time, during which his pen went, or pretended to go as cleverly as ever. I made several attempts to get out of their way—such as standing on a chair to look at a map on the other side of the room, and poring over the columns of a Kentish newspaper—but they always attracted me back again; and whenever I looked towards those two red suns, I was sure to find them, either just rising, or just setting.

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. . . As I came back, I saw Uriah Heep shutting up the office; and, feeling friendly towards everybody, went in and spoke to him, and at parting, gave him my hand. But oh, what a clammy hand his was! as ghostly to the touch as to the sight! I rubbed mine afterwards, to warm it, *and to rub his off*.

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. . . I found Uriah reading a great, fat book, with such demonstrative attention that his lank forefinger followed up every line as he read, and made clammy tracks along the page (or so I fully believed) like a snail.

“You are working late to-night, Uriah,” says I.

“Yes, Master Copperfield,” says Uriah.

As I was getting on the stool opposite, to talk to him more conveniently, I observed that he had not such a thing as a smile about him, and that he could only widen his mouth, and make two hard creases down his cheeks, one on each side, to stand for one.

"I am not doing office-work, Master Copperfield," said Uriah.

"What work, then?" I asked.

"I am improving my legal knowledge, Master Copperfield," said Uriah. "I am going through Tidd's Practice. Oh, what a writer Mr. Tidd is, Master Copperfield!"

My stool was such a tower of observation, that as I watched him reading on again, after this rapturous exclamation, and following up the lines with his forefinger, I observed that his nostrils, which were thin and pointed, with sharp dints in them, had a singular and most uncomfortable way of expanding and contracting themselves; that they seemed to twinkle instead of his eyes, which hardly ever twinkled at all.

"I suppose you are quite a great lawyer?" I said, after looking at him for some time.

"Me, Master Copperfield?" said Uriah. "Oh, no. I'm a very 'umble person."

It was no fancy of mine about his hands, I observed; for he frequently ground the palms against each other as if to squeeze them dry and warm, besides often wiping them, in a stealthy way, on his pocket-handkerchief.

IN THE WOOD AT NIGHT¹

VICTOR HUGO

It was only seven or eight minutes' walk from the skirt of the wood to the spring, and Cosette knew the road from having gone there several times by day. Strange to say, she did not lose her way, for a remnant of instinct vaguely guided her; still she did not look either to the right or to the left, for fear of seeing things in the branches and shrubs. In this way she reached the spring. It was

¹ From *Les Misérables*, ch. 89. By permission of T. Y. Crowell.

a natural basin hollowed by the water in the dry soil, about two feet in depth, surrounded by moss and that gauffered grass which is called Henri IV.'s ruff, and paved with a few heavy stones. A rivulet escaped from it with a little gentle murmur.

Cosette did not take the time to breathe. It was very dark, but she was accustomed to come to this fountain. She felt in the obscurity for a young oak that leant over the spring, and usually served her as a support, caught a branch, stooped down, and plunged the bucket into the water. She was in such a violent state that her strength was tripled. While thus bent, she did not notice that the pocket of her apron emptied itself into the stream, and that the fifteen-sous piece fell into the water. Cosette neither saw nor heard it fall; she drew up the bucket nearly full, and placed it on the grass. This done, she felt that she was exhausted with fatigue; she would have liked to start again at once, but the effect of filling the bucket had been so great that she found it impossible to move a step. She fell on the grass, and lay there utterly exhausted. She shut her eyes, then opened them again, not knowing why, but unable to do otherwise. By her side the water stirring in the bucket made circles that resembled snakes of white fire. Over her head the sky was covered with large black clouds, which seemed like smoke; the tragic mask of the gloom seemed to bend vaguely over this child. Jupiter was setting in the profundity; the child gazed with a wondering eye at this large star which she did not know, and which terrified her. The planet was at this moment very near the horizon, and was passing through a dense fog, which gave it a horrible redness. The fog, which was of a gloomy purple hue, enlarged the planet, and it looked like a luminous wound. A cold wind blew from the plain; the wood was dark, but there was no rustling of leaves, and

none of the vague and fresh gleams of summer. Large branches stood out frightfully, and shapeless, stunted bushes soughed in the glades. The tall grass twined under the breeze like eels, and the brambles writhed long arms provided with claws seeking to clutch their prey. A few withered patches of fern, impelled by the breeze, passed rapidly, and seemed to be flying before something that was coming up.

Darkness produces a dizziness. Man requires light, and anyone who enters the opposite of light, feels his heart contracted. When the eye sees darkness, the soul sees trouble: in an eclipse, in night, in sooty opaqueness, there is anxiety even for the strongest men. No one walks alone at night in a forest without a tremor, for shadows and trees are formidable densities. A chimerical reality appears in the indistinct profundity; the inconceivable is visible a few paces from you with spectral clearness. You see floating in space, or in your own brain, something vague and intangible, like the dreams of sleeping flowers. There are stern attitudes on the horizon, and you breathe the effluvia of the great black vacuum. You feel frightened and inclined to look behind you. The cavities of night, the silent outlines which disperse as you advance, the irritated tufts, the lurid pools, the lugubrious reflected in the mournful, the sepulchral immensity of silence, the possible strange beings, the bending of mysterious branches, the frightful torsos of trees, the long waves of quivering grass;—you are defenceless against this. There is no man, however bold, who does not shudder and feel this proximity of agony; something hideous is experienced, as if the soul were amalgamated with the shades. This penetration of darkness is indescribably sinister in a child. Forests are apocalypses, and the beating of the wings of a little soul produces a sound of death beneath their monstrous dome.

Without understanding what she experienced, Cosette felt herself affected by this black enormity of nature: it was no longer terror that overpowered her, but something even more terrible than terror. She shuddered, and words fail to describe the strange nature of this shudder which chilled her to the heart. Her eye had become stern, and she felt as if she could not prevent herself from returning to the same spot on the morrow. Then, by a species of instinct, and in order to emerge from this singular state which she did not understand, but which terrified her, she began counting aloud, one, two, three, four, up to ten, and when she finished, she began again. This restored to her a true perception of the things that surrounded her: she felt the coldness of her hands which she had wetted in drawing the water. She rose, for fear had seized upon her again, a natural and insurmountable fear. She had only one thought left, to fly, fly at full speed through the wood, and across the fields, as far as the houses, the windows, and the lighted candles. Her eye fell on the bucket before her; and such was the terror with which her mistress inspired her that she did not dare fly without the bucket. She seized the handle with both hands and found it difficult to lift. She proceeded thus for about a dozen yards, but the bucket was full and heavy, and she was compelled to set it on the ground. She breathed for a moment, and then lifted the bucket, and started again, this time going a little farther. But she was still obliged to stop once more, and, after a few moments' rest, set out again. She walked with body bent forward and drooping head, like an old woman; and the weight of the bucket stiffened her thin arms. The iron handle swelled and froze her small white hands. From time to time she was forced to stop, and each time she did so the cold water from the bucket plashed her bare legs. This occurred in the heart of a wood, at night

in winter, far from any human eye. She was a child of eight years of age, and God alone at this moment saw this sorrowful sight, and her mother too, doubtless! for there are things which open the eyes of the dead in their graves.

THE SIEGE OF THE ROUND-HOUSE¹

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

I do not know if I was what you call afraid; but my heart beat like a bird's, both quick and little; and there was a dimness came before my eyes which I continually rubbed away, and which continually returned. As for hope, I had none; but only a darkness of despair and a sort of anger against all the world that made me long to sell my life as dear as I was able. I tried to pray, I remember, but that same hurry of mind, like a man running, would not suffer me to think upon the words; and my chief wish was to have the thing begin and be done with it. . . .

While the brush lasted, I had not the time to think if I was frightened; but now, when all was still again, my mind ran upon nothing else. The thought of the sharp swords and the cold steel was strong in me; and presently, when I began to hear stealthy steps and a brushing of men's clothes against the round-house wall, and knew they were taking their places in the dark, I could have found it in my mind to cry out aloud. . . .

Then there came a single call on the sea-pipe, and that was the signal. A knot of them made one rush of it, cutlass in hand, against the door; and at the same moment, the glass of the sky-light was dashed in a thousand

¹ From *Kidnapped*, ch. 10. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

pieces, and a man leaped through and landed on the floor. Before he got to his feet, I had clapped a pistol to his back and might have shot him too; only at the touch of him (and him alive) my whole flesh misgave me, and I could no more pull the trigger than I could have flown.

He had dropped his cutlass as he jumped, and when he felt the pistol, whipped straight around and laid hold of me, roaring out an oath; and at that my courage came back again, or I grew so much afraid as came to the same thing; for I gave a shriek and shot him in the midst of the body. The foot of a second fellow, whose legs were dangling through the sky-light, struck me at the same time upon the head; and at that I snatched another pistol and shot this one through the thigh, so that he slipped through and tumbled in a lump on his companion's body. There was no talk of missing, any more than there was time to aim; I clapped the muzzle to the very place and fired. I might have stood and stared at them for long, but I heard Alan shout as if for help, and that brought me to my senses.

MEMOIRS OF AN ISLET¹

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

AN ugly reef is this of the Dhu Heartach; no pleasant assemblage of shelves, and pools, and creeks, about which a child might play for a whole summer without weariness, like the Bell Rock or the Skerryvore, but one oval nodule of black-trap, sparsely bedabbled with an inconspicuous fucus, and alive in every crevice with a dingy insect between a slater and a bug. No other life was there but

¹ From *Memories and Portraits*, p. 126. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

that of sea-birds, and of the sea itself, that here ran like a mill-race, and growled about the outer reef forever, and ever and again, in the calmest weather, roared and spouted on the rock itself. Times were different upon Dhu Heartach when it blew, and the night fell dark, and the neighbour lights of Skerryvore and Rhu-val were quenched in fog, and the men sat prisoned high up in their iron drum, that then resounded with the lashing of the sprays. Fear sat with them in their sea-beleaguered dwelling; and the colour changed in anxious faces when some greater billow struck the barrack, and its pillars quivered and sprang beneath the blow. It was then that the foreman builder, Mr. Goodwillie, whom I see before me still in his rock-habit of undecipherable rags, would get his fiddle down and strike up human minstrelsy amid the music of the storm.

FATHER PALEMON¹

JAMES LANE ALLEN

HE was very tired. He had come forth to work before the first gray of dawn. His lips were parched with thirst. Save the little cup of cider and a slice of black bread with which he had broken his fast after matins, he had not tasted food since the frugal meal of the previous noon. Both weary and faint, therefore, he had hardly sat down before, in the weakness of his flesh, a sudden powerful impulse came upon him to indulge in a moment's repose. His fingers fell away from the untied cords, his body sank backward against the trunk of the gnarled apple-tree by which he was shaded, and closing

¹ The White Cowl, pp. 138-139. By permission of the Macmillan Co.

his eyes, he drank in eagerly all the sweet influences of the perfect day.

For Nature was in an ecstasy. The sunlight never fell more joyous upon the unlifting shadows of human life. The breeze that cooled his sweating face was heavy with the odor of the wonderful monastery roses. In the dark green canopy overhead two piping flame-colored orioles drained the last bright dew-drop from the chalice of a leaf. All the liquid air was slumbrous with the minute music of insect life, and from the honeysuckles clambering over the wall at his back came the murmur of the happy, happy bees.

But what power have hunger and thirst and momentary weariness over the young? Father Palemon was himself part of the pure and beautiful nature around him. His heart was like some great secluded crimson flower that is ready to burst open in a passionate seeking of the sun. As he sat thus in the midst of Nature's joyousness and irrepressible unfoldings, and peaceful consummations, he forgot hunger and thirst and weariness in a feeling of delicious languor. But beneath even this, and more subtle still, was the stir of restlessness and the low fever of vague desire for something wholly beyond his experience. He sighed and opened his eyes. Right before them, on the spire beyond the gardens, was the ancient cross to which he was consecrated. On his shoulders were the penitential wounds he had that morning inflicted with the knotted scourge. In his ears was the faint general chorus of saints and martyrs, echoing backward evermore solemnly to the very passion of Christ. While Nature was everywhere clothing itself with living greenness, around his gaunt body and muscular limbs—over his young head and his coursing hot blood—he had wrapped the dead white cowl of centuries gone as the winding-sheet of his humanity. These were not clear

thoughts in his mind, but the vague suggestions of feeling, which of late had come to him at times, and now made him sigh more deeply as he sat up and bent over again to tie the hempen cords.

NATURE SPEAKS¹

GEORGE MEREDITH

AN oppressive slumber hung about the forest-branches. In the dells and on the heights were the same dead heat. Here where the brook tinkled it was no cool-lipped sound, but metallic, and without the spirit of water. Yonder in a space of moonlight on lush grass, the beams were as white fire to sight and feeling. No haze spread around. The valleys were clear, defined to the shadows of their verges; the distances sharply distinct, and with the colors of day but slightly softened. Richard beheld a roe moving across a slope of sward far out of rifle-mark. The breathless silence was significant, yet the moon shone in a broad blue heaven. Tongue out of mouth trotted the little dog after him; crouched panting when he stopped an instant; rose weariedly when he started afresh. Now and then a large white night-moth flitted through the dusk of the forest.

On a barren corner of the wooded highland, looking inland stood gray topless ruins set in nettles and rank grass-blades. Richard mechanically sat down on the crumbling flints to rest, and listened to the panting of the dog. Sprinkled at his feet were emerald lights; hundreds of glow-worms studded the dark, dry ground.

He sat and eyed them, thinking not at all. His ener-

¹ From *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, ch. 42. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

gies were expanded in action. He sat as a part of the ruins, and the moon turned his shadow westward from the South. Overhead, as she declined, long ripples of silver cloud were imperceptibly stealing toward her. They were the van of a tempest. He did not observe them or the leaves beginning to chatter. When he again pursued his course, with his face to the Rhine, a huge mountain appeared to rise sheer over him, and he had it in his mind to scale it. He got no nearer to the base of it for all his vigorous outstepping. The ground began to dip; he lost sight of the sky. Then heavy thunder-drops struck his cheek, the leaves were singing, the earth breathed, it was black before him and behind. All at once the thunder spoke. The mountain he had marked was bursting over him.

Up started the whole forest in violet fire. He saw the country at the foot of the hill to the bounding Rhine gleam, quiver, extinguished. Then there were pauses; and the lightning seemed as the eye of heaven, and the thunder as the tongue of heaven, each alternately addressing him; filling him with awful rapture. Alone there—sole human creature among the grandeurs and mysteries of storm—he felt the representative of his kind, and his spirit rose, and marched, and exulted, let it be glory, let it be ruin! Lower down the lighted abysses of air rolled the wrathful crash: then white thrusts of light were darted from the skies, and great curving ferns, seen steadfast in pallor a second, were supernaturally agitated, and vanished. Then a shrill song roused in the leaves and the herbage. Prolonged and louder it sounded, as deeper and heavier the deluge pressed. A mighty force of water satisfied the desire of the earth. Even in this, drenched as he was by the first outpouring, Richard had a savage pleasure. Keeping in motion, he was scarcely conscious of the wet, and the grateful breath of the weeds

was refreshing. Suddenly he stopped short, lifting a curious nostril. He fancied he smelt meadow-sweet. He had never seen the flower in Rhine-land—never thought of it; and it would hardly be met with in a forest. He was sure he smelt it fresh in dews. His little companion wagged a miserable wet tail some way in advance. He went on slowly, thinking indistinctly. After two or three steps he stooped and stretched out his hand to feel for the flower, having, he knew not why, a strong wish to verify its growth there. Groping about, his hand encountered something warm that started at his touch, and he, with the instinct we have, seized it, and lifted it to look at it. The creature was very small, evidently quite young. Richard's eyes, now accustomed to the darkness, were able to discern it for what it was, a tiny leveret, and he supposed that the dog had probably frightened its dam just before he found it. He put the little thing on one hand in his breast, and stepped out rapidly as before.

The rain was now steady; from every tree a fountain poured. So cool and easy had his mind become that he was speculating on what kind of shelter the birds could find, and how the butterflies and moths saved their colored wings from washing. Folded close, they might hang under a leaf, he thought. Lovingly, he looked into the dripping darkness of the coverts on each side, as one of their children. He was next musing on a strange sensation he experienced. It ran up one arm with an indescribable thrill, but communicated nothing to his heart. It was purely physical, ceased for a time, but recommenced, till he had it all through his blood, wonderfully thrilling. He grew aware that the little thing he carried in his breast was licking his hand there. The small rough tongue going over and over the palm of his hand produced the strange sensation he felt. Now that he knew the cause, the marvel

ended; but now that he knew the cause, his heart was touched and made more of it. The gentle scraping continued without intermission as on he walked. What did it say to him? Human tongue could not have said so much just then.

A pale gray light on the skirts of the flying tempest displayed the dawn. Richard was walking hurriedly. The green drenched weeds lay all about in his path, bent thick, and the forest drooped glimmeringly. Impelled as a man who feels a revelation mounting obscurely to his brain, Richard was passing one of those little forest-chapels, hung with votive wreaths, where the peasant halts to kneel and pray. Cold, still, in the twilight it stood, rain-drops pattering around it. He looked within, and saw the Virgin holding her child. He moved by. But not many steps had he gone ere his strength went out of him, and he shuddered. What was it? He asked not. He was in other hands. Vivid as lightning the Spirit of Life illumined him. He felt in his heart the cry of his child, his darling's touch. With shut eyes he saw them both. They drew him from the depths; they led him a blind and tottering man. And as they led him he had a sense of purification so sweet he shuddered again and again.

When he looked out from his trance on the breathing world, the small birds hopped and chirped; warm, fresh sunlight was over all the hills. He was on the edge of the forest, entering a plain clothed with ripe corn under a spacious morning sky.

NOTES ON ILLUSTRATIVE SÉLECTIONS

1. **RUSKIN**, *La Riccia at Noon-day*.—Not a landscape, but a series of color impressions. The force of the description centres in the latter part, where the author, with his customary delight in rich and delicate hues, suggests to the imagination the “conflagration of colors” and “showers of light.” Sentence movement and diction will be seen to be admirably adapted to the intended effect.

2. **RUSKIN**, *The Mosses*.—This is a simpler and less glowing report of the results of minute observation of colors and outlines—such a report as all of us are capable of making; but the average person, somewhat blind from force of habit, has a tendency to describe all moss as merely soft and green.

3. **FLAGG**, *Autumn Woods*.—An instance of popularized scientific description, in which the author tries first to interest the reader in the phenomenon of fall coloring of leaves in general, then gradually informs him concerning the characteristic hues of individual trees. It is readily seen that the author is more at home when giving this definite information, and that the general remarks which preface it are a device for securing attention to the results of his scientific observation.

4. **BURROUGHS**, *The Song-sparrow*.—The recurrence of a few epithets delicately emphasizes the quality of the bird note; and the impression upon the sense of hearing is still better realized by the aid of the figure of speech which visualizes the rise and fall of sound.

Mr. Burroughs has a keen ear for sounds, and uses epithets discriminatingly. *Riverby*, *Fresh Fields*, and *Wake-Robin* show an abundance of sound description. A difficult feat is the report of the full chorus of bird voices, *Fresh Fields*, pp. 116 ff.

5 and 6. **FLAGG**, *Sounds from Trees* and *Motions of Trees*.—These passages are interesting not so much for the facts presented—since they are not new to the observant person—as for the feeling of the significance of these facts and the resulting stimulus to fresh and independent observation.

7. **BURROUGHS**, *The Hawk in Flight*.—This has some didactic value as a careful set of notes on the hawk's habitual movements, but it is chiefly interesting because it creates a vivid picture of the

flight and interprets the character of the motion by the use of figures and epithets which summarize the impression.

Does the mild humor of the expression, "with reminiscences of frogs and mice stirring in his maw," sufficiently atone for the sudden drop in style?

8. BURROUGHS, *The Predatory Black Snake*.—The opening sentence quickly suggests a definite visual image, but the remainder of the selection is devoted to more generalized impressions. Note the adaptation of words and phrases here and there to the suggestion of the quick and sinuous motion of the snake.

9. RUSKIN, *The Fall of Schaffhausen*.—Color and sound enter into the description, but the clearest impression is that of the changeful appearance of the moving waters. The power of the description is in its rousing of one's sense of activity, an effect traceable in large measure to the happy use of verbs (both finite and participial forms) as the chief descriptive epithets. Note also the indirect means of suggesting strength of motion—by effect upon objects near.

10. ALLEN, *A Kentucky Forest*.—A landscape impression rather than a visual image of objects definitely grouped. To this impression most of the physical senses make their contributions, which are so delicately interwoven as to be inconspicuous on first reading. The imaginative impression is uppermost in the reader's mind. The selection is adapted to use in fiction, giving a touch of local color to the background of a story.

11. KIPLING, *The Rukh in Spring*.—An example of the use of physical sensations of the most varied sorts, to suggest vividly to the imagination the full tide of animal and vegetable life in a tropical jungle.

12. KIPLING, *The Time of New Talk*.—A highly imaginative description which nevertheless gives the impression of verisimilitude, owing to apparent minuteness of observation, the strong appeal to the physical senses, and the choice of concrete means of expression. Note the excellent use of sounds and odors, and of general physical feelings induced by the weather and the season.

Paragraphs 3, 4, and 5 may be studied for suggestiveness of diction.

13. KIPLING, *The Lama*.—As a study in *chiaroscuro*, it may be interesting to compare the imaginative effect of this description with that which might be made by a painting of the scene. The comparative vagueness of the objects behind the cart and the strong lights and firm outline of the lama in the foreground make it easy to visualize the whole.

14 and 15. KIPLING, *Nightfall* and *Dawn*.—Though brief, these passages are rich in suggestion of sense-experience. The swift-moving style is well adapted to the presenting of the rapid changes in the tropics.

16. STEVENSON, *A Night Among the Pines*.—This record raises into literature a familiar experience of "sleepers out." The separate details noted are such as might appeal to any keen observer. Aside from the stylistic merits, the unique quality of the description consists in the author's fine appreciation of what such a sense-experience as a whole means to his own imagination and thought life. The psychology is true in the insensible merging of each fresh sensation into the general state of feeling.

17. RUSKIN, *The Campagna of Rome*.—The description is throughout impressionistic rather than pictorial. Note the playing of the mood through the whole as it colors the description of the physical appearances of objects, and as it concentrates in a pathetic fallacy.

18. GARLAND, *A Farm-house*.—An excellent example of the significance of a bit of impressionistic description for the story in which it occurs. The picture of the old farm-house which he refuses to call a home is seen from the point of view of a successful man of the world, who is endeavoring, after a fashion, to adapt himself to his old environment during a visit to his parents. The depression of his spirits caused by the poverty, discomfort, and chilling ugliness he sees gives the reader an insight into the temperament of the man, a lover of ease and beauty, marks him off more sharply from his brother and his parents, and enables one to predict the outcome of the effort to fit back into the place that he has left. The description is of real service to the story.

19. IRVING, *Westminster Abbey*.—The effect of the whole is descriptive, though the framework is narrative and expository comments are interspersed. It is not a pictorial description, but a reverie, the author's meditations furnishing the most memorable passages. The skilful selection of details to convey a single emotional impression has been commented on in the text (page 31). The heightening of effect by contrasting details should also be noted.

20. LOWELL, *Feathered Pecksniffs*.—An example of humorous interpretation enlivening description.

21-27. These seven caricatures may be compared with respect to vividness and to the degree of exaggeration. The sketches of Miss Griselda Oldbuck and My Lady Viscountess are external caricatures, Scott's being merely ludicrous, and Thackeray's satir-

ical. The descriptions by Irving, Dickens, and Eliot are good-natured literary cartoons. Ichabod and his horse are exaggerated beyond all possibility of belief, but they are undeniably picturesque and interesting. The crude but vivid similes contribute to pictorial definiteness as well as to the broad humor of the sketch. Dickens's Miss Peecher is a character visibly made up according to a set pattern, but none the less amusing as a type. The greater naturalness of George Eliot's sketch of Mrs. Crackenthorp seems to be due to its brevity and to the fact that the character is not analyzed but presented in action. Carlyle's picture of Coleridge is a more serious effort at interpreting character from physical appearance, speech, and action. There is evident an effort at truthful portrayal here and there, but the spirit of caricature animates the whole. The impression is driven home by outright announcement as well as by the vivid picturing of such features as might be expected to suggest it.

28. KIPLING, *The Queen of Delhi's Voice*.—After spending two shots on epithet, the author resorts to roundabout suggestion of the terrors of a woman's tongue, through its effect upon her servants.

29. HAWTHORNE, *The Voice of Dimmesdale*.—The voice is made to reveal the man—his guilt and the quality of his suffering, as well as the secret of his power and charm. The interpretation is carried out in part by deliberate analysis by the author, but in large measure by indirect suggestion through the effect upon the listening partner of his guilt.

30. PATER, *La Gioconda*.—Direct interpretation, at once intellectual and fanciful, of that striking but almost indefinable expression on the face of Mona Lisa. The passage shows unusual finish of workmanship: perfect unity of expression, polished sentences, exquisite diction.

31. HAWTHORNE, *The Faun of Praxiteles*.—A subtle bit of interpretation, partly descriptive,—using physical details to suggest the main impression of the Faun's amiable and sensual nature,—and partly devoted to critical analysis.

32. CARLYLE, *A Portrait of Dante*.—A sample of intelligent hero-worship—sympathetic interpretation of traits of character, based on a reading of the features and expression by the light of a knowledge of the poet's life and work. Note the expressive epithets.

33. RUSKIN, *The Old Tower of Calais Church*.—Here the author, instead of describing very definitely the neglected and unsightly ruin, impresses the reader with its significance. Vigorous and serviceable in the present, although surrounded by the atmosphere of

an earlier age, the unrepared but still used Calais Church is treated by Ruskin as a symbol of Europe's attitude toward the past.

34. **RUSKIN, *Turner's Slave Ship*.**—Like the preceding selection, this emphasizes the symbolism of the object; but here care is taken first to reproduce imaginatively the picture as a whole.

Attention is called in the text (page 65) to the full, rounded close which gives a sense of finish to the passage.

35. **GIBBON, *Byzantium*.**—This is a fair sample of what is called in the text scientific, or didactic, description, reporting clearly those facts which would appear to any observer, and excluding the personal point of view. The author keeps the proportions, refusing to elaborate details; he proceeds in clear and orderly sequence from point to point; and he furnishes a "fundamental figure" to help the imagination of the reader to outline the Imperial City, the harbor, and the Forum.

36. **HAWTHORNE, *Sights from a Steeple*.**—The opening announcement of the limits of the scene and of the watchman's point of view, and the transitional sentences indicating changes in the direction of his vision contribute to clearness. But study the details observed, with reference to the sizes of objects, their apparent distance, and comparative clearness, and see whether the chosen point of view is carefully adhered to. (Referred to in text, page 46.)

37. **PÖE, *A Descent into the Maelström*.**—The opening paragraphs illustrate indirect description of objects by their effect upon the observer. The whole description may be studied for its well-chosen details, its adaptation of sentence structure and diction to the intended effect, and its skilful observance of a changing point of view (see page 47). The student of narration will be interested also in tracing the means by which an imaginary line of incidents, well rounded by minute description, can be made to produce an impression of reality.

38. **RUSKIN, *Skies of a Day*.**—The selection has that scientific interest which attaches itself to any natural phenomenon carefully observed and well reported; but its chief value is, of course, imaginative. One may note the successful climax, the happy use of metaphors, and the adaptation of the movement to the illusion of floating clouds in gradually changing combinations.

39. **WALLACE, *The Passing of the Caravans*.**—A moving picture, in which the rapid and confused flight is suggested by selection of details, by sentence movement, and by the summarizing comments of the Prince, which, coming first and last, unify the whole impression.

40. SCOTT, *The Lists at Ashby*.—This illustrates the chief service of description to narration, the rounding out of incident into life-likeness. Study the difference in effect between the description of the place (which is in bulk), and that of the tournament itself (which is carried in solution by the narrative).

41. RUSKIN, *St. Mark's*.—Order of details is discussed in the text (page 54 ff.). The method of the describer is clear, so far as clearness depends upon announcement and observance of point of view and upon order; but, since he aims to convey the impression of a "confusion of delight," to make the reader experience with him a bewilderment of the senses, his methods are impressionistic rather than pictorial.

Contrast this with the best description of St. Mark's that you can find in a guide-book.

42. SCOTT, *A Castle*.—An objective description, whose chief aim is clearness. As a writer of historical romance, Scott is concerned about making his descriptions of people, buildings, and natural scenery convincing and even instructive, as well as interesting; hence the minute care with which he describes his castles.

43. SCOTT, *The Antiquary's Den*.—This is pictorial, like the preceding selection, but it is also interpretative. Note the choice of furnishings and ornaments as giving the room a character; the summing up of that impression in several phrases; and the significance of the character of the den for an understanding of the tastes and habits of the owner.

44. DICKENS, *The Old Boat*.—Details are selected with an eye to the picturesque, the unique. The interest is heightened by weaving action into the description and by inviting the reader to view the boat as it can best be viewed—through the eyes of a child in whom he has become personally interested.

45. STEVENSON, *Across the Lozère*.—Traveller's description of a stretch of country: consisting of a series of impressions of landscape suggesting the general character of the country, but without set pictures of whole scenes. The weaving in of varied sense impressions and the hints of the author's personality are quite as interesting as the features of the landscape.

46. RUSKIN, *The Mountain Gloom*.—A highly personal and interpretative sketch of a bit of mountain scenery, making no very definite pictorial impression. The diction deserves study. On the fitness of sentence flow to thought, see page 64 of the text.

47. LONGFELLOW, *A Postilion*.—Simple, objective description, employing odd and picturesque detail for its own sake.

48. SCOTT, *Ludovic Lesly*.—Pictorial description, with deliberate emphasis, through proportion, upon one striking detail.

One who is studying narration should consider the effect of such a stationary sketch of character upon the story interest of the chapter in which it occurs.

49 and 50. SCOTT, *Rebecca and Rowena*.—In these companion portraits Scott sets before the reader a concise and yet detailed account of the appearance of the heroines, whose charms serve as foils for one another. Such neat, methodical description of the appearance of the main characters was in vogue with all the novelists of Scott's day and continues in use to the present time, though we see now a tendency to avoid set description wherever possible and build up very gradually the reader's impression of the appearance of the characters.

51. SCOTT, *De La Marck*.—A deliberate analysis of the significance of features and expressions apparently contradictory; with one impression always uppermost—that of the resemblance to the wild boar. Note the summarizing of this impression first and last.

52. DICKENS, *A Dinner Company*.—A rapid succession of caricatures, some of which are good-natured, some ironical. Variety of material, rapidity of portraiture, and vividness of epithet are the chief excellences. Considering the consequent monotony of the form of introducing details, is the mirror device a happy one? (The beheaded sentences in connected writing are, of course, a mannerism, and can hardly be regarded as a necessary result of this method.)

53. THACKERAY, *Beatrix Esmond*.—The first sketch, of Beatrix as a girl, is interpretative description, merging in expository analysis of traits. The second sketch, of Beatrix the woman, as she is coming down the stairs, is to some extent interpretative, but it also creates a very definite picture, as of a scene on a stage. If the descriptions of Beatrix are traced through the story and compared, they will illustrate one means by which Thackeray makes his characters seem real—the admirable consistency with which they grow, their appearance, like their mental and moral traits, developing just as one expects it to.

54. STEVENSON, *Alan Breck*.—The method is suggestive and not at all photographic. A lively impression of the personality of Breck is conveyed through his expressions and actions, together with their effect upon the observer who describes him.

55. HARDY, *Queen of Night*.—A complete character-sketch, with elaborate personal description, the details of which are carefully harmonized in one dominant expression, that of "smouldering

rebelliousness." This character impression, it will be observed, cannot be brought out satisfactorily without a suggestion of her relation to her environment.

56-58. Carlyle's brief portraits show the value of compression, and the possibility of concentration through the use of well-chosen epithets. The author has evidently analyzed for himself the characters of the men, but he portrays them concretely and not by exposition.

59. ALLEN, *The Parson*.—A character sketch which begins with interpretation interwoven with pictorial suggestion and passes into purely expository analysis. One feels throughout the kindly humor and delicate sympathy of the author's attitude toward his character.

60. ALLEN, *A Kentucky Gentleman*.—Here is a study in proportions—the elaborate emphasizing of the embroidered coat-tails. The sketch is a very gentle caricature; for the author is seen to sympathize with and respect old Peter at the very moment that he laughs at his eccentricities.

61. GALSWORTHY, *A Row of Portraits*.—In the sketches of Mrs. Winslow, Mrs. Pendyce, and the little consumptive who holds within him the secret of a mortal fear, details seem to be chosen deliberately for stamping a single impression of personality. The other sketches are chiefly interesting for their happy phrasing, and for their naturalness. The author has evidently been widely observant of those minutiae of personal appearance which every shrewd judge of character takes into account, but which many writers of fiction are inclined to shun as commonplace or trifling.

(Many of Galsworthy's best descriptions are so interwoven with the narrative that they cannot be extricated without detriment.)

62. ELIOT, *The Valley of the Floss*.—This is a typical novel setting, not ornamental but structural. The Floss has its part in the crisis and the conclusion of the story; and it is but fitting that it should be described in the beginning.

63. GARLAND, *A Branch Road*.—The scenery is made natural and convincing by being interwoven in the narrative and by being viewed through the eyes of a character in the story.

64. HARDY, *Egdon Heath*.—In *The Return of the Native* we see one of the largest and most successful attempts in modern fiction to make the landscape felt as a vital part of the community life. In the extracts given here one may see how Hardy brings characters and scenery together into one vast panorama, and how he gives an idea of the mood as well as the physical aspects of the heath. The greater part of the extract is interpretative, but there is one excellent

pictorial description, that of the bonfires and the people seen by their light against the dark background of the heath.

65. GALSWORTHY, *Glimpses of City Streets*.—The first sketch is of interest for its realism of portrayal, the others having an added interest in what they hint of the social philosophy of Galsworthy.

66. STEVENSON, *The Old Sea-Dog*.—A successful attempt to describe a man alive. The method is particularly good for the opening of a story, because such description does not clog, but actually helps the movement.

67. ALLEN, *David*.—So long a description is quite allowable in a story if it is felt to have a real purpose. The author has paused to create a picture, but not for the mere pleasure of portrayal. This glimpse of the boy realizing imaginatively his pet ambition wins the reader's sympathy and at the same time prepares the way for coming action.

68. HAWTHORNE, *Hepzibah Pyncheon and Her Shop*.—This, too, is a story situation, not a mere scene. The description is largely progressive. The author's lively appreciation of the humor and the pathos of the situation determines his selection of details for emphasis.

69. ELIOT, *A Country Dance*.—It may be of interest to compare, with respect to life-likeness, this group, seen through the eyes of actual onlookers, with the mirror view of the diners in the sketch by Dickens.

70. ELIOT, *Silas Marner*.—In this and the two following selections the descriptions are not complete in any one place, but scattered widely through the narrative. Note the recurring emphasis upon the strange eyes of Silas Marner.

71. ELIOT, *Maggie Tulliver*.—As in Thackeray's descriptions of Beatrix, one may find here an illustration of perfect consistency in the progressive description of a growing, changing character. The glimpses of Maggie are briefer hints, and the connection between the description and the narrative is a little closer.

72. DICKENS, *Uriah Heep*.—A highly impressionistic sketch, with its recurring emphasis on the clammy hands and sleepless eyes. This is of the order of realistic caricature.

73. HUGO, *In the Wood at Night*.—This affords an opportunity to compare the effectiveness of generalized description (virtually an exposition) of man's fear of the dark (paragraph 3) with that of the concrete account of the child's fear, suggested by her physical sensations, the changed appearances of familiar objects, and her actions.

74. STEVENSON, *The Siege of the Round-House*.—A mental state represented entirely by concrete means. It is natural that a young boy, unaccustomed to analyzing his feelings, should simply tell his physical sensations.

75. STEVENSON, *Memoirs of an Islet*.—Again we have the causes and the results of fear, with no analysis of the fear itself. As the feeling is that experienced by strong, brave men, the author is at pains to justify it by making the situation very clear.

76. ALLEN, *Father Palemon*.—A crisis in the heart life of a character. The joyousness of nature is thoroughly portrayed; for it not only furnishes dramatic contrast to Father Palemon's mood, but is one of the determining causes of his revolt.

77. MEREDITH, *Nature Speaks*.—The heart of the man, like nature, experiences purification after storm. The selection is of interest as a mere description of a natural phenomenon; as showing the novelist's use of natural background; and as illustrating the very close connection between the physical and the spiritual in the life of man.

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